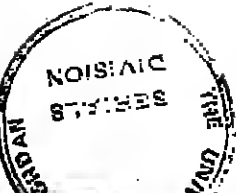


Israel jails three expellee leaders

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Three senior figures among the expelled Palestinian leaders remain in Israeli prison for at least six months, including spokesman Abdul Aziz Rantisi, military officials said Monday. Dr. Rantisi, who is a Gaza physician and member of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas), is also a U.N. school headmaster in Nasserat refugee camp and helped draft the Hamas charter in 1988. Mr. Shamah is also a teacher from Shati, another camp on the Gaza Strip. Under emergency laws, "administrative detention" allows the Israeli authorities to hold prisoners without trial for renewable periods of six months. The two among the final 197 expellees Israel brought back last Wednesday after a year in southern Lebanon for links to groups which claimed responsibility for a wave of anti-Israeli attacks. The army freed 132 on Sunday night and a dozen more were expected to be released later Monday, Israeli radio reported. Many of the remainder are likely to remain in jail, serving out sentences imposed before the mass expulsion on Dec. 17 last year.



Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية مستقلة عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية «الراي»

Qatar foreign minister to visit Jordan

AMMAN (RI) — Qatari Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad Bin Jassim Ben Jaur Al Thani will visit Jordan on Jan. 1 to discuss Middle East peace and inter-Arab reconciliation, officials said on Monday. Sheikh Hamad, whose visit will see an improvement in ties strained by the 1991 Gulf crisis, was expected to meet King Hussein and other top officials. They added, Jordanian-Qatari relations, damaged by Jordan's perceived pro-Baghdad sympathy during the Gulf crisis, have returned to their pre-crisis of warmth, officials and diplomats say. Amman's efforts to mend fences with Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, former major financial backers, have not borne fruit. Qatar's Sheikh Mohammed Bin Hamad Al Thani, brother of Qatari ruler Sheikh Khalifa Bin Hamad Al Thani, came to Jordan in October at the invitation of King Hussein. Crown Prince Hassan went to Doha in August in a visit hailed by the two countries as a move towards healing rifts. Qatar and Oman are the only Gulf Arab states which did not break formal ties with Iraq after its 1990 invasion of Kuwait. Qatar likes to pursue an independent policy to counter Saudi influence in the region, diplomats say.

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Abu Nowar meets Palestinian envoy

AMMAN (Petra) — Acting Prime Minister Abu Nowar Monday received Palestinian Ambassador Al Tayyeb Abdul Rahim upon the latter's request. During the meeting they reviewed recent development in Jordanian-Palestinian relations in a spirit of cooperation and on the basis of Jordan's constants in supporting the Palestinian cause and the Palestinian people.

France expels 26 Algerian nationals

PARIS (AFP) — Two-six Algerian nationals were deported to Algiers on Monday aboard a chartered plane because they lacked residence permits, the French interior ministry announced. The 26 were arrested during a police swoop Dec. 13 in northern Paris as part of the conservative government's get-tough policy on illegal immigrants. The 26 Algerians, accompanied by 10 policemen, took off from Le Bourget airport, north of Paris. An AFP photographer saw three of the Algerians, wrists handcuffed behind their backs, boarding the plane. Officials said the 26 were not linked with country-wide raids on Nov. 9 on the homes of alleged Islamic fundamentalists close to Algeria's Islamic Salvation Front (FIS). Eighty people were arrested during that operation and some were charged with "terrorist" offences.

Deputy mayor killed in Algiers suburbs

ALGIERS (AFP) — Two suspected Islamic fundamentalist gunmen shot dead a deputy mayor in an Algiers suburb in the latest such attack on appointed council officials, the independent Al Watan daily reported Monday. The killers shot Lakhdar Baat, deputy mayor of Gue-de-Constantine, three times in the face at point-blank range outside his home on Saturday, the newspaper reported. Several members of local authorities appointed to replace elected councils dominated by Muslim fundamentalists have been assassinated, while most others have received death threats.

Turkey, Iran join war against Kurd rebels

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkey and Iran said Monday they were determined to wipe out Kurdish "separatist terrorism" threatening their joint borders, in a statement marking the start of warmer relations between the two countries. The move came during the three-day visit of Iranian Vice-President Hassan Habibi to Ankara. Mr. Habibi said on his arrival that the two countries "will hit hard against terrorism with new border measures as Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Ciller said she hoped their joint border would become "one of peace." But officials did not give details of the bilateral security talks.

Ukraine to dismantle 20 SS-24 missiles

KIEV (AP) — Ukraine is to dismantle almost half of the 46 SS-24 nuclear missiles in its nuclear arsenal inherited from the former Soviet Union, Deputy Prime Minister Valery Shmarov said Monday. He said Ukraine would dismantle 20 of the 46 strategic missiles by the end of this month. The decision comes only days after last week's meeting of top Ukrainian, Russian and U.S. officials.

Ghali supports Japan's bid for council seat

TOKYO (AFP) — United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Ghali supported a Japanese plan to win a permanent seat on the U.N. Security Council when he met Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa here Monday, officials said. The U.N. secretary-general, who had already expressed support for Japan's bid last week, said Japan should campaign aggressively if it wanted to become a permanent Security Council member.

Self-rule, negotiations shift to Paris today

PLO describes Oslo talks as failure but Israel says progress was made

TUNIS (Agencies) — Talks between the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and Israel are to resume in Paris on Tuesday to try to end the delay in implementing the Palestinian self-rule agreement, PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat said Monday.

Both Mr. Arafat and the PLO Executive Committee expressed dissatisfaction with the results of weekend talks in Norway between Palestinian and Israeli delegates.

"It is expected that another meeting will be held tomorrow in Paris," Mr. Arafat told reporters after meeting Tunisian President Zine Al Abidine Ben Ali.

"We hope we will reach some agreements through it. It is regrettable that the Israelis are doing after they committed themselves to what was agreed on," he added.

Mr. Arafat said the two sides still disagreed on the definition of the Jericho area and the manning of checkpoints between Jericho and Jordan and the Gaza Strip and Egypt.

The PLO Executive Committee, which met on Monday to bear a report from its delegates on the Oslo talks, also issued a statement, saying control of checkpoints was the key for implementation of the self-rule agreement.

"The Executive Committee gave directions to its delegation... to reject all partial or nominal solutions," it said.

Under the peace accord signed by Israel and the PLO in September, Israeli troops were to begin withdrawing from the West Bank town of Jericho and the Gaza Strip on 13 as the first step to limited self-rule. The deadline was missed.

"The PLO Executive Committee disapproves on Israeli statements and positions which try to ignore the core of the

disagreement and manoeuvre to lose time and not commit (Israel) to faithful and precise implementation within the schedules agreed on," the PLO statement said.

A source close to the Israeli government said he expected the talks to resume in Paris Tuesday.

"Probably so," said the source, who declined to be identified, when asked about the Tunis report.

He expected the Paris talks to be at a ministerial level as were those in Oslo.

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, speaking on Israeli army radio, said: "The fact there is still a meeting proves the two sides are making a supreme effort to overcome the difficulties."

Israel and the PLO disagree on who should be in charge of the international border crossings into the autonomous regions.

They also have differing ideas over how large the Jericho area should be and security arrangements for Jewish settlements in the autonomous zones.

The PLO wants full control to give its autonomous entry the first trappings of statehood. Israel says the PLO is violating an earlier agreement that during the interim period Israel will remain in charge of external security and foreign relations.

"I think we will overcome the difficulties, the difficulties are not simple," Mr. Peres said. "The problems are open and we are trying to find ways to overcome them without giving up on principles or the declaration of principles."

The Paris meeting comes on the heels of a weekend of talks in Norway which ended with no outward signs of progress.

Israel radio said the Paris talks would involve the same

negotiators who were in Norway.

There was no explanation from either Israel or the PLO for the change of venue.

PLO chief negotiator Yasser Abed-Rabbo was scheduled to leave for Paris Monday night, while Mr. Peres would head the Israeli team.

A PLO Executive Committee official who requested anonymity told AFP the "talks failed" in Oslo and that the only positive achievement was the decision to meet again.

"We did not overcome the impasse. The Israelis did not accept our proposals and there is no way that we would adopt theirs," the PLO official said.

The Tunis-based Palestinian news agency Wafa said Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Mr. Arafat exchanged letters Monday over the "failure" of the latest round of talks.

Israeli Environment Minister Yossi Sarid said on his return from Norway that progress was made, but not enough to set a date for a new Rabin-Arafat summit.

"Progress was definitely made, but the extent of it we will only know after the two sides meet again," Mr. Sarid said on Israeli army radio.

Mr. Rabin said last Wednesday he hoped the negotiations with the PLO would be successful despite the difficulties, adding that it was important his meeting with Mr. Arafat be well-prepared even if that meant delaying it by several days.

On Monday, Mr. Rabin's spokesman, Oded Ben-Ami, said a new meeting would only be scheduled when "it is clear it will bring solutions to the problems."

(Continued on page 3)

King, Queen return home from Britain

AMMAN (J.T.) — Their Majesties King Hussein and Queen Noor returned home Monday evening after a several-day private visit to the United Kingdom.

The King and Queen were received upon arrival by their Royal Highnesses Crown Prince Hassan and Princess Sarwat and members of the Royal Family as well as speakers of the Upper and Lower Houses of Parliament and other senior officials.

Earlier Monday, King Hussein received at his residence in London British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd and discussed with him the latest developments in the Middle East, the peace process in particular as well as bilateral relations and ways of enhancing them.

The meeting was attended by the director of the Middle Eastern department of the British Foreign Office, Sir Michael Burton, Royal Court Chief Stuart Zaid Ben Shaker and the Jordanian ambassador in London, Fouad Ayyoub, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, said.

Majali returns today

Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali is expected to be back



Their Majesties King Hussein and Queen Noor are received upon their return home Monday by

His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan (Petra photo)

Tuesday morning after an 11-day visit to Japan and Malaysia.

During his visit to Japan, the premier met with Japanese Emperor Akihito and banded him a written letter from Crown Prince Hassan. During the meeting they discussed recent developments in the Arab-Israeli peace process and bilateral relations.

Dr. Majali also met with Japanese Crown Prince Naruhito, the ministers of finance and foreign affairs and the

managing director of the Overseas Fund for Economic Development.

During the meetings, they reviewed relations between the two countries especially in the economic field and discussed Japanese funding of some Jordanian developmental projects. The Japanese side showed willingness to continue supporting Jordan in all fields.

Petra said. In Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on Monday, Dr. Majali visited the remains of a 12-storey con-

dominium toppled by an avalanche Dec. 11.

Officials estimate 50 people were in the building when it tumbled over into a deadly wrangle of concrete and steel.

Senior police personnel at the site briefed Dr. Majali and other Jordanian officials on the past week's rescue efforts.

No Jordanians had been in the building. Dr. Majali arrived Saturday for a three-day visit and held talks with prime minister Mahathir Mohammad Sunday.

Israel, PLO and donors discuss police

OSLO (Agencies) — Israel, the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and donor countries on Monday discussed the creation and funding of a Palestinian police force vital for implementing a historic peace deal on Palestinian self-rule.

PLO negotiator Nabil Shaath told reporters during a break in the one-day talks at an Oslo hotel that about \$100 million was needed for the task.

"People have indicated their willingness to help... some of the money needed will be coming out of this meeting," Dr. Shaath said.

Palestinian police are to take over security in Gaza and the West Bank town of Jericho after a withdrawal of Israeli forces. But an impasse over implementing the peace accord has held up a pull out, originally due to start on Dec. 13.

Nineteen delegations, in-

cluding the United States, Russia, Japan, the World Bank and the European Community (EC) commission, are taking part in the talks hosted by Norway, which secretly helped broker the original peace deal this year.

Norwegian Deputy Foreign Minister Jan Egeland said that the PLO had presented a list of requirements for a 10,000-strong Palestinian national police and security force.

But he added in a speech that: "The size and composition of the police force are still under discussion between the parties," Israel wants tight limits on the size of any Palestinian force.

Both Dr. Shaath and Mr. Egeland took part in closed-door talks in Norway at the weekend which Mr. Egeland said made "clear progress" in clearing away obstacles to the peace agreement, signed in September. New talks are to

be held Tuesday in Paris.

Mr. Egeland said Norway had allocated \$1 million in its 1993 budget for the Palestinian police force and envisages a similar amount in next year's budget. Egypt and Jordan have offered training and equipment.

"But so far, the supply of assistance from the international community does not meet the urgent demands of the Palestinians," Mr. Egeland said.

He acknowledged it would take time to put a fully-fledged police force in place, but stressed that it was essential to get started.

"The establishment of a police force is a complex and sensitive task, nevertheless, without public order and internal security, our assistance in other areas will be to no avail," he said.

"We must resolve this in

order to get on with the urgent tasks of reconstruction and rehabilitation."

Israeli news reports said the PLO originally suggested a heavily armed force of about 30,000, while Israel wants a limit of 15,000, with light arms. The two sides were believed to have moved closer.

Norway, acting as head of the coordinating committee for the \$2 billion pledged in financial aid to Palestinian areas, has called the meeting to help clear the ground for the implementation of the Oslo accord.

"We do not expect to solve all the problems concerning the police force. The meeting in Oslo is part of a process," said Ingvor Havnen, the foreign ministry press spokesman.

"The problem is not the money itself. But such huge sums require detailed planning and monitoring," said special adviser Tom Vraalsen of the Norwegian foreign ministry.

Bomb at Falange HQ kills 1, wounds 80

BEIRUT (Agencies) — A powerful bomb ripped through the rightist, Christian-led Falange Party headquarters in the Lebanese capital on Monday, killing one person and wounding at least 80 others, hospital and security officials said.

As many as 45 of the 120 party members attending a high-level meeting were wounded when a truck packed with 250 kilograms of dynamite exploded outside the building, Falange spokesman George Shahin said.

"Some party members attending the meeting were so badly hurt that I could not recognise them," he said, adding three may have died. Security sources said at least one person was killed and hospital officials reported 80 wounded.

The first-floor room where the meeting was being held was totally devastated and the ceiling had caved in, an AFP correspondent at the scene said. The floor was covered with blood, glass and rubble.

The blast also destroyed 15 cars outside and started several fires. Buildings were also damaged and broken glass was strewn over the streets.

Voice of Lebanon, the Falange radio, said party chief George Saader was ill at home and did not attend the meeting of the party's political bureau and central council.

His deputy Munir Hajj and secretary General Karim Pakradouni were also absent from the gathering.

The meeting, which is held every Monday, was chaired by senior party official Salam Mattar.

Police blocked off the area as ambulances rushed to take the casualties to hospitals while rescue teams searched through the rubble with their bare

hands.

An hour after the blast occurred three people were dug out alive from the rubble and the search was to continue with bulldozers.

Interior Minister Beshara Merhej, who visited the scene with Health Minister Marwan Hamade, described the explosion as a "crime against Lebanon."

A 15-year civil war marked by car bombing, shelling and other violence ended in Lebanon in 1990, but the last bombing was in 1991.

Rescue workers carried torches as they sifted through in search of casualties. Ambulances carried away the wounded and firecrews doused the vaulted, blood-spattered hall with water. A Christmas tree was broken on the floor.

Rescue operations were hampered by a blackout. Even three years after the 1975-90 civil war, Beirut's power supply is intermittent.

Mr. Shahin said the bomb was planted against the outside wall of the conference hall. It is on the ground floor of the building, which dated back to the early 1920s.

It was not clear how the bomb was placed or concealed, but a garden abutting the wall prevents carbombs being planted near the building.

There was no immediate word from the party or the authorities on who was behind the attack.

The right-wing Falange, which is predominantly made up of Maronite Catholics, has been at odds with Prime Minister Rafik Hariri since he took office 14 months ago.

The Falange, the main party of Lebanon's one million Maronites, was a major loser in the Arab League-brokered peace treaty that ended the 1975-90 civil war.

GCC opens summit

RIYADH (AP) — Collective defence and economic cooperation topped the agenda, but King Fahd and his partners in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) also were to deal with explosive border disputes when they convened their summit Monday.

King Fahd, together with the leaders of Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman and the United Arab Emirates, were expected to discuss ways of firming up a joint defence plan, faltering since it was first formulated after the Aug. 2, 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

The current blueprints fall short of the grand plan for a 100,000-strong joint force that Sultan Qaboos of Oman first outlined for his Gulf allies.

Instead, the GCC leaders were to examine a recommendation put up by their defence ministers to boost a fledgling 10,000-strong Peninsula Shield joint force to 25,000.

Qatar, at loggerheads with Saudi Arabia over a border dispute, was reported to be rejecting this plan. Oman and the UAE have dismissed it as inadequate. Arab diplomatic sources said.

The leaders were expected to endorse recommendations of the defence ministers for a joint early warning system. This, according to the Saudi-based diplomats, would mean purchase of three or four radar planes at a cost of \$3-5 billion. The radar jets would beef up five Saudi-owned AWACS planes that operate with U.S. Air force assistance.

The GCC members states had to depend on their main Western allies led by the United States, Britain and France to evict the Iraqis from Kuwait.

Reformists welcome Arafat invitation to dialogue

By Sana Atiyeh and Nermeen Murad
Jordan Times Reporters

AMMAN — Palestinian personalities demanding reform in the policy and decision-making process of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) leadership Monday welcomed Chairman Yasser Arafat's readiness to respond to their demands made in a petition signed by 116 prominent personalities.

The petition, signed by three PLO factions and independent members from the Palestine National Council (PNC), demanded that the PLO leadership take a more democratic approach, particularly in its handling of the negotiations with Israel in implementing the Oslo accord.

Forty-five of the signatories, who met Monday at the PNC headquarters in Amman, welcomed Mr. Arafat's invitation to start a dialogue with the petitioners as "positive."

Palestinian sources said that Palestinian Ambassador to Jordan Al Tayeb Abdul Rahim Sunday delivered a message from Mr. Arafat to the petitioners, or "reformers," that he was ready to meet a delegation representing them in Tunis to discuss their demands.

"It seems the leadership has finally started to take us seriously," a petitioner told the Jordan Times. "His invitation to discuss these demands is indicative of his readiness to put matters on the right track."

Analysts said that the nature of the personalities who signed the petition and the PLO's "difficult" situation in its negotiations with Israel on the implementation of the Oslo accord were major factors that contributed to Mr. Arafat's ini-

tial positive response to The petition.

The signatories include leaders from the occupied territories and from the diaspora, members of Mr. Arafat's mainstream Fateh movement, members of Yasser Abed Rabbo's Democratic Front (FIDA), and members of the Palestine People's Party (PPP), in addition to independent PNC members and peace negotiators such as Dr. Haider Abdul Shafi.

Mr. Arafat had previously ignored calls for reform in the decision-making policies by leaders who were critical of his single-handed leadership.

The petitioners also elected a permanent follow-up committee during Monday's meeting, consisting of nine personalities, "which ensures the seriousness of the process," according to Tayseer Arouri, a member of the elected committee.

"The formation of this permanent committee is a clear message that this process will not end with the meeting with Mr. Arafat in Tunis," Mr. Arouri, a member of the PPP, told the Jordan Times.

Mr. Arafat invited up to seven representatives from the petitioners, who will be chosen from all the factions and from the occupied territories and the diaspora, Mr. Arouri added.

The petition, which was circulated in Jordan and the Israeli-occupied territories and sent to Mr. Arafat on Nov. 16, was seen by analysts as the beginning of a reformist movement which may have enough impact to enforce change.

The first news of the petition, in mid-November, indicated that the signatories would commit themselves to demanding immediate reforms

and setting up specialised political and legal committees to chart out negotiating strategies and lead the transition to Palestinian autonomy.

The signatories to the petition included well-known Palestinian personalities who until recently were considered to be against the current Middle East negotiations such as veteran Palestine Central Committee member Ibrahim Abu Ayyash.

The text of the petition indicated support for the continuation of the negotiations saying that the Palestinian participation had received "constitutional endorsement" through the PLO's Executive Committee and Central Committee.

The signatories also endorsed the signing of the Palestinian-Israeli agreement in Washington in September. "We, the signatories of this agreement, saw the Palestinian-Israeli agreement as a decisive political happening which should be dealt with responsibly and positively. (We aim to) develop the positive elements in it and containing the negative."

"Therefore," the petition continued, "we first announce our complete commitment to join our people in building our new entity."

"Second, we announce our commitment to the Palestine Liberation Organisation and its legitimate institutions as the sole representative of the Palestinian people and national umbrella that cannot be replaced or paralleled in organising the national energy and lead it towards fulfilling the legitimate national aspirations of the Palestinian people."

"We are not satisfied with the working method of political leadership at this stage, not

on the level of running the difficult and sensitive negotiations with the Israeli side nor on the level of preparing for phase of national development in the transition stage," the list of demands by the signatories began.

"What has become apparent to all is that the political leadership is conducting its role in an ad hoc way and is not preparing for the steps needed to crystallise the national interest with well-studied planning and executive."

"Second, the political leadership has not exerted enough effort to mobilise a much needed national dialogue which have adopted the agreement as an opportunity which provides for serious possibilities to move forward towards our national goals, or with the principled opposition to the agreement."

"Our national traditions impress on us the need to open this dialogue and work diligently to make it succeed to build an acceptable limit of national unity which would secure internal Palestinian security and creates a healthy atmosphere which would build support for the new tasks of the Palestinian people."

"Third... the political leadership was not successful in presenting the agreement to the Palestinian people in an objective manner so that this people can understand the horizons and possibilities for immediate and future movement (within the agreement's stipulations). This has increased ambiguity, confusion and apprehension, especially as the Palestinian people are receiving contradictory and

(Continued on page 3)

Open Palestinian politics may stun PLO leaders

By John West
Reuter

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM

Many Palestinians think PLO leaders are in for a nasty culture shock when they return home to rule their fellow countrymen after decades scattered around the Arab World.

On one side are two million Palestinians living in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, used to battling Israeli occupation and one another through multilingual faxes, open protest and, most important of all, the ballot box.

On the other, the PLO's leadership has spent most of the last 30 years under false names or behind closed doors, shuttling from one Arab capital to another in an atmosphere of intoxicating slogans, inner circles and perpetual suspicion.

The two worlds are not totally separate, PLO leaders sat up and took notice when the intifada began in the late 1980s to challenge Israel more effectively than 20 years of guerrilla operations and a few of those expelled by Israel have found their way into the lower echelons of its leadership.

But the real test will be in the coming months when PLO leaders return to the territories to run self-rule in the teeming Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho.

"There will be a kind of a clash. (PLO leader Yasser) Arafat is coming with a different mentality. The PLO will come with a mentality of appointments and quotas and autocracy," said Manuel Hassassian, professor of political science at Bethlehem University.

"The Palestinians here are not going to accept another kind of authoritarian state.... We have built up a kind of pluralism here," he added.

At elections for the doctors syndicate in the town of Bethlehem, Mohammad Rizq, head of the outgoing committee, canvassed members with a pro-Fatah list of candidates.

"I'm not voting for him or him," says a sceptical Isa Al Thawabtah, running his finger down the list in front of Mr. Rizq. "These are professional elections, I'm not going to vote over politics."

Eighty-eight out of the branch's 123 doctors turned up for the vote and grilling the outgoing committee for an

hour and a half.

Coalitions for and against the PLO-Israel peace agreement have been fighting fierce campaigns in union and student elections across the occupied territories. Each side has had mixed results but both have ended power peacefully when defeated.

At a rally held by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) in East Jerusalem, about 700 demonstrators are treated to a mixture of traditional Arab nationalist rhetoric and sophisticated.

After a couple of impassioned speeches and slogan shouting by hundreds of young men, many of them intifada activists, the crowd first listens to a direct satellite telephone link-up with PFLP leader George Habash, then watches a sharp and amusing 20-minute satire called "The Farce," a radical interpretation of the PLO's peace deal with Israel.

Even Hamas, the group which has vowed to kill as many Israeli soldiers and settlers as possible to wreck the agreement, is influenced by the Jewish state it rejects, joining the intense information barrage in which all parties in Israel's fractious politics engage.



Female Mujahideen-e-Khalq fighters train in a camp in Iraq (photo courtesy: Mujahideen-e-Khalq)

Women — a key component of Mujahideen battle against Tehran

By G. H. Jansen

THREE hundred and fifty years after the Scottish Protestant reformer and fundamentalist militant John Knox issued a pamphlet entitled "A First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women" protesting the anti-Protestant policies of the three queens ruling in France, Scotland and England, a monstrous regiment of women is in the march against the anti-feminist regime of Shi'ite clerics in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Through the settings and motivations of the Iranian mullahs and of John Knox are utterly different their attitude is similar: "That is the exercise of authority by women is contrary to natural law and revealed religion."

It is perhaps for that very reason that the largest and best-organised anti-Khomeini resistance group, the Mujahideen-e-Khalq, has placed itself in the hands of the women leaders in the organisation.

The pro-woman tendency of the Mujahideen to counter the anti-woman bias of the Khomeini regime has been evident from the movement's earliest days when its battle was against the rule of the Shah. It was inevitable that a progressive liberal, somewhat leftist but still strongly Islamic group like the Mujahideen should accept the equality of men and women, as the secret police of the Shah and of the clerics have done, in a negative way. Under both regimes women prisoners have been more brutally tortured than the men. As of now one-third of all Mujahideen members are women.

One of the women tortured to death by the mullahs' police was the sister of Maryam Rajavi, the wife of the Mujahideen leader, Massoud Rajavi. Maryam Rajavi has now been nominated by the National Council of the Resistance, its "parliament," as the president of Iran following its liberation from the mullahs. After her elevation to the highest civilian position she resigned from her military post as the chief-of-staff and deputy commander-in-chief of the National Liberation Army (NLA) of Iran, a post which she had held since 1987.

Indeed, it was because of the successes she had in modernising the Mujahideen's armed forces that she was promoted to the presidency. When she took over, the NLA was almost entirely an infantry force; now it is a modern army with armoured, artillery, mechanised infantry



Mariam Rajavi

and helicopter units. Naturally, Mrs. Rajavi has been succeeded as chief-of-staff by yet another of the Mujahideen's women officers; the key post of director of operations is also held by a woman.

The role of women in the NLA is one of complete equality with men. The women serve in every sort of unit — tanks, artillery as well as infantry — and have gone into battle side by side with the men, who in some units serve under women officers. As this correspondent observed at one of the Mujahideen bases in northern Iraq near the Iranian frontier, the women live in the same barracks as the men but in separate dormitories. In the transport section of the base, women in oil stained overalls lay sprawled under vehicles which they were repairing. This certainly gave reality to the Mujahideen's claim of equality between the sexes.

The pro-feminist trend in the Mujahideen-e-Khalq kept up its momentum when in August the membership of the National Council of Resistance was increased by the addition of 128 new members to a total of 235, half of them are women.

The final step, also taken in August, was when the highest decision-making body, the leadership council, or cabinet, was reconstituted with 12 members, all women, and with 12 other women as candidate members.

Thus, in this Iranian resistance group women control or predominate in the general staff of its army, in its parliament and in its cabinet where they have the monopoly. It could be argued that this arrangement is far too heavily weighted in favour of women. There are two possible reasons this unusual imbalance between the sexes. The first is that it is an obvious ploy to win the support of Iranian women who, as a

matter of policy, are repressed by the mullahs' regime, providing, of course, that Iranian women become aware that the Mujahideen-e-Khalq supports and favours them. Whether this is so may be doubted because news in Iran is strictly controlled by the authorities. And while the Mujahideen has its own radio and television transmitters which, it is claimed, cover 80 per cent of the country, 80 per cent of women almost certainly do not hear or view their programmes.

The second reason is that women, because of their suppression and sufferings under the mullahs can be expected to be more highly motivated and more dedicated to the struggle against the mullahs' regime than their male comrades, both soldiers and civilians.

For all its Westernised sophistication the Mujahideen-e-Khalq is strongly Islamic. For which reason at its meetings men and women members sit separately and the most striking feature of the women soldiers' uniforms is a bright scarlet headscarf, the hijab worn with a long tunic and trousers.

The liberation army is obviously a well-trained, disciplined and well-equipped force with an overall strength of around 10,000 men and women. It is equally obvious that this elite corps will not be able to defeat the much larger armed forces of the mullahs' government and the Mujahideen admit this. As they see it the army has two roles: to destabilise the Tehran government by probing attacks into Iran. In one of these, in 1988, the penetration was up to 100 kilometres deep, in the few days before the Iran-Iraq war ended. Since the war ended Iran has not permitted the Mujahideen to make any more attacks, only manoeuvres alongside the frontier. So the second role of the army is to wait for the deterioration of conditions inside Iran to produce a general uprising when the liberation army would enter Iran to deliver the coup de grace.

This is the hope. And while there is widespread discontent inside the Islamic republic, erupting into violent protest here and there, there is still a long way to go before the stage of a general uprising is reached. If and when that happens and the full force of the Mujahideen goes into action, the generally chauvinist males of the Islamic republic will be astonished to find that they are being liberated by forces being led by women. It could be that some of these males could even die of surprise.

Arafat's wife 'will fight' him for women's rights

NEW YORK (R) — The wife of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat said in an interview aired Sunday she would be the first to fight the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) chief over the issue of women's rights and would press for an end to polygamy.

"I told him, 'Ok listen, if you will not accept to give rights for women, I will be the first woman to demonstrate under your window in the Palestinian new state'," Suha Arafat told the CBS television programme "60 minutes."

Mrs. Arafat, whose secret marriage to the PLO chief caused an uproar among Palestinians after it became public early last year, said she had converted to Islam but would press for better divorce terms for women and an end to polygamy.

Interviewer Lesley Stahl quoted the French-educated, former economic advisor to the PLO leader as saying: "Their rights have to be guaranteed with laws protecting women in divorce and banning polygamy."

Mrs. Arafat, formerly Suha Tawil, has recently increased her public profile but has not been able to win the hearts of many Palestinians who believed the PLO chief when he said he was married to the revolution.

The marriage was also criti-

cised because Mrs. Arafat is less than half Mr. Arafat's age and from the Palestinian Christian minority.

"I converted to Islam for state reasons... not for religious reasons," said Mrs. Arafat, who made a public visit to the Christian shrine of Fatima during a recent visit to Portugal. "When you get married to a very important personality, you have to follow his religion."

Mrs. Arafat was noticeably absent at the historic Sept. 13 signing in Washington of the PLO-Israel peace agreement after being ordered by PLO officials not to attend, PLO sources have said.

Mrs. Arafat, a tall blonde who said the PLO leader proposed shortly after they met in Paris in 1989 and began working together, described the PLO chief as "sensitive, refined, generous and humble."

But the PLO leader, interviewed with his wife at a villa in Tunis, said nothing had changed in his life since the marriage.

"Nothing has been changed. You can ask her," said Mr. Arafat, a former guerrilla known for his punishing pace and autocratic leadership.

"God help her," he said spooning vegetables into his mouth from a dining table laid with disposable plates.

Kuwait court ruling fails to put Farhat case to rest

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The family of three victims of Kuwaiti vengeance after the liberation of Kuwait from seven months of Iraqi occupation in early 1991 has described the life-term sentence handed down to a former Kuwaiti officer found guilty of murder as a partial victory and vowed to seek full justice in the case.

The Farhat family, which lost its head, Ismail Farhat and his son Osama, criticised the court ruling as falling short. The Farhats say that a death sentence would have prompted the convict to expose "the real culprits" in the case.

In its ruling last Wednesday, a Kuwaiti security court found Jaber Al Ameeri, a former Kuwaiti police officer, guilty of murdering Ismail Farhat and Osama Farhat on March 2, 1991, immediately after Iraqi forces were ousted from the emirate.

The court rejected a third charge — that of raping Naim Farhat, but returned a guilty verdict of attempting to kill the woman. The defendant had pleaded not guilty of all charges.

Naim Farhat, son of Ismail Farhat and brother of Osama Farhat and Naimat Farhat, said: "It ain't over yet. We are going to keep them pushing."

Mr. Farhat, an art dealer who lives in Santa Cruz, California, vowed that he would continue to pressure Kuwaiti officials to exhumate the bodies of his father and brother, pay reparations to the family and investigate Kuwaiti government complicity in the crime.

According to Miss Farhat's testimony, the Farhats were long-term residents of Kuwait who refused to leave the emirate when the Iraqis invaded in August 1990.

Ismail Farhat used to work for the Kuwaiti security department and because of his background Iraqi officers frequently visited the house to question him on Kuwaiti resistance activities.

Miss Farhat says that her

father did not cooperate with the Iraqis and instead members of the family helped the Kuwaiti resistance.

On March 2, 1992, four days after the Iraqis were ousted from Kuwait, Mr. Ameeri came to the Farhat residence saying he had orders to arrest the family. He made Miss Farhat tie up her father and brother in the living room, then took her inside, raped her and shot her in the head, before coming out and shooting dead the two hogtied men.

Miss Farhat, who heard the shots that killed her father and brother, survived the ordeal, with the help of friends and neighbours, she managed to reach her brother in the U.S., where she underwent surgery.

Her doctors say that bullet fragments remain in her head and the woman is half paralysed, she needs continued help and therapy.

The case was brought to light after her brother Naim launched an all-out effort to ensure justice in the case and enlisted the support of international and American human rights activists and lawyers.

After months of stonewalling, the Kuwaiti government finally arrested Mr. Ameeri based on a positive photo identification made by Miss Naimat.

It was the first case that Kuwaiti tried following widespread reports of a spree of vengeance by the Kuwaitis in the post-liberation emirate against most non-Kuwaitis.

Miss Naimat travelled to Kuwait in August and identified Mr. Ameeri in court as the man who killed her father and brother and raped and shot her.

But her arguments that the assault on the family was ordered by senior Kuwaiti Interior Ministry officials who suspected the Farhats of collaborating with the Iraqis and that at least two other men waited outside the Farhat residence when Mr. Ameeri went on his killing and raping rampage were not accepted by the court.

And that is what Naim Farhat has vowed to wage war against.

According to Mr. Farhat, a death sentence would have prompted Mr. Ameeri to reveal the names of his accomplices and those who gave him the orders to eliminate the family.

Now that only a life sentence has been handed down, apparently under a deal made between the defence and the court, chances of the man revealing the names and other details remain grim.

"He killed two persons, and I lost my health," said Miss Farhat. "I am going to suffer for the rest of my life, I have bullet fragments still in my head, who was behind all this?"

The Farhats have also criticised the court's ruling that Miss Farhat be paid \$17,500 as compensation for her injuries.

"The Kuwaiti government should be ashamed before the world because of this meagre response to the abuse inflicted on my family," Miss Farhat said in comments carried in U.S. newspapers.

The family says that it paid \$45,000 for a single surgery performed on Miss Farhat. Jennifer Green, a voluntary lawyer from the Centre for Constitutional Rights, called on the Kuwaiti government to widen its investigation of the Farhat case as well as other human rights abuses.

"This was but one of many brutal attacks on non-citizens after the war," she said. "Kuwait will not clear its record of human rights violations unless this trial is followed with a full accounting and punishment for all the others."

Ms. Green also criticised Kuwait's handling of the rape prosecution.

The court said it could not return a guilty verdict since there was no eyewitness to the rape of Miss Farhat.

"The scepticism about the rape charge reflects the Kuwaiti judicial system's failure to understand the nature of violence against women," said Ms. Green.

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Home News

Reopening of Iraq's Umm Qasr port worries Jordanian businessmen

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordanian officials and shipping agents are planning to raise the impact of the reopening of the Iraqi port of Umm Qasr on the Jordanian port and transport sectors during the visit next week of the Iraqi transport minister, officials and shipping sources said Monday.

The minister, Ahmad Morada, is expected here on Dec. 17 on his way to attend a Dec. 19 meeting of the Arab League transport ministers' council in Cairo, officials said.

"We hope to discuss with the minister Iraq's plans to use Umm Qasr for its imports and exports," said a senior official.

The official, who preferred anonymity, said the Aqaba Ports Corporation and shipping agents as well as Jordan's transport sector were worried that the flow of Iraq-bound cargo through Aqaba could go down from the already depressed level, and deliver further blows to the national economy.

At the same time, Jordan respects Iraq's rights to use its

own facilities and ports, the official said.

"We will have to find some common ground to ensure that the interests of all sides are protected in a reasonable manner," said the official.

The Jordan Shipping Agents Association (JSAA), the umbrella body for all shipping agents in the Kingdom, said it was studying the situation.

"We have no comment at this point in time except that we are assessing and evaluating the impact of the reopening of Umm Qasr port on Jordan's economy and transport sector in general and the shipping sector in particular," said Sufian Muhaisen, manager of the association.

"We will be issuing a series of recommendations soon," he told the Jordan Times.

Other shipping sources said the situation was worrying, particularly that Iraqi imports through Aqaba had already gone down dramatically since 1992, after shipowners as well as importers were discouraged by the overzealous inspections of vessels by enforcers of the international sanctions against Iraq.

The volume of Iraq-bound

cargo has declined to less than one-third since most Iraqi importers have moved base from Jordan to Turkey or even Iran, they said.

Aqaba became the main lifeline for Iraqi imports after Iraq's ports were closed shortly after the Iran-Iraq war broke out in 1980.

Although the war ended in August 1988, the Iraqi ports continued to be unusable because of war debris and fears of shipowners to send their vessels to an area believed to have been full of mines planted during the war.

However, Umm Qasr became operational shortly after the end of the war, only to be closed again when Iraq invaded Kuwait in August 1990, prompting the U.N. to impose sweeping international sanctions which included a blockade on Iraqi ports.

Iraqi focus shifted back to Aqaba, which turned out to be the only port through which Iraqi imports exempt from the sanctions could pass.

However, the sanctions took their toll on the port's activities as well as Jordan's transport sector, which largely depended on Iraqi imports; and the

reopening last month of Umm Qasr after the Iraqis cleared mines and repaired the port facilities have given rise to the concern that Aqaba stood to suffer further.

Some Jordanian officials said a minimum amount of Iraqi imports would continue to pass through Aqaba despite the reopening of Umm Qasr since the Iraqi port is unable to handle large freighters and also because many shipowners might be unwilling to send their vessels to a potentially unstable region.

An Iraqi policy, reported in Baghdad newspapers this month, demands that all Iraqi imports pass through Umm Qasr except in cases where the port does not have the required technical facilities. Umm Qasr can only handle vessels of less than 25,000-tonne capacity.

At least three ships, two of them carrying sugar and the other rice, have already docked and unloaded their cargo in November and December after they were boarded and inspected by the international task force patrolling the Gulf and the Red Sea to enforce the sanctions against Iraq.

JRS chief proposes forming task force to deal with road conditions

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan is considered one of the countries with very high rates of road accidents despite efforts exerted by the concerned authorities to contain the situation, according to Raef Nijem, president of the Jordan Roads Society (JRS).

Noting that more than 20,000 road accidents occur in Jordan every year, Mr. Nijem said that there was need for a scientific and comprehensive study into the causes of the

road accidents and for close cooperation between the private and public sectors to bring an end to the great human and material losses.

Addressing a two-day seminar, in a bid to reduce road accidents and improve road conditions, Mr. Nijem suggested the creation of a task force representing the private and public sectors to conduct technical studies and work out a plan to deal with road conditions.

According to Dr. Abdul Razzak Ensour, minister of public works and housing who deputised for his Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan in opening the meeting about 20,000 road accidents a year were draining the country's resources.

Noting that Jordan has achieved great strides in expanding road networks over the past two decades the minister said that the roads were estimated to be 10,000

kilometres in length compared to 4,000 in 1970.

Mr. Nizar Abidi, who is acting as rapporteur to the seminar, said that 338 people were killed and more than 1,000 others were injured as a result of road accidents in the Kingdom in 1992.

He said 13 working papers will be discussed by delegates from 25 private and public sector organisations and voluntary societies.

World Council of Museums to hold conference in Amman

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan will host an international conference on world museums in April next year in cooperation with the Paris-based World Council of Museums, Tourism Minister Mohammad Udwan announced Monday.

He made the announcement following his talks Monday with Mrs. Elizabeth Deburt, the council's secretary general with whom he discussed arrangements for the coming conference which is to be held between April 9 and 13.

He said that the council has chosen Jordan for the conference in view of its central geographical location in the Arab World and the huge treasures of antiquities and historical sites in the Kingdom.

Dr. Udwan briefed Mrs. Deburt on the role of Jordan's

museums and their contribution to the cultural movement in the country.

Mrs. Deburt said that she was impressed by Jordan's care and attention given to museums and their contents of archaeological artefacts.

She thanked the Ministry of Tourism for hosting the April conference in which all Arab countries and cultural and educational institutions would participate.

According to ministry officials the conference will address various legal issues and regulations which determine the role of national museums and their contribution towards scientific and academic studies.

Several working papers, the ministry said, would be reviewed by the delegates including those from Jordan.

Muta University moves to turn King Abdullah residence into museum

MUTA (Petra) — Muta University, near Karak, is taking steps to transform residence of the late King Abdullah Ibn Al Hussein in Maan into a heritage and archaeological museum following its restoration.

University President Abdul Rahman Attiyat said that the idea of making the old building into a museum was part of the university's drive to highlight the national and historic sites in the Kingdom.

A special technical committee has been set up by the university in cooperation with the concerned authorities in Jordan to carry out this important mission, said Dr. Attiyat.

Mohammad Tarawneh, a member of the heritage committee at Muta University reviewed the archaeological and historical importance of the King Abdullah residence and the other prominent archaeological sites in southern Jordan.

His colleague, Dr. Abdul Aziz Mahmoud, presented an outline of the King Abdullah residence, noting that the two-story building was set among a cluster of similar buildings all believed to have been constructed in 1904. He said these buildings have been used by Jordanian national organisations and government departments over the years.

He also presented an outline of the programmes adopted by the technical committee to carry out the restoration project.

According to Dr. Mahmoud, the following Jordanian organisations will contribute to this national project: The Royal Court, the Al Al Bait Foundation, the ministries of culture, information, public works, and tourism, the University of Jordan, the Jordan Phosphate Mines Company, the Jordan Cement Factories Company, the Arab Potash Company, the Aqaba Railway Corporation and the departments of education, tourism and police in the Maan governorate.

More meetings have been scheduled to follow up on the progress of work at the project site.

U.S. cultural attache visits Muta

AMMAN (J.T.) — Dr. Abdul Rahman Attiyat, president of Muta University, received in his office Sunday Mr. Jonathan Rice, the cultural attache at the U.S. Embassy. Dr. Attiyat briefed Mr. Rice on the university departments and discussed with him means of promoting cultural and academic cooperation between Muta University and U.S. institutions. The cultural attache, then, made a tour of the university civilian campus, where he visited the computer centre, the library, and the English department.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Senior tourism official retires

AMMAN (Petra) — The Council of Ministers Monday decided to retire Nasri Atallah, the Ministry of Tourism's secretary general as of Jan. 1, 1994. The council, which did not name a replacement, said that the decision was taken upon Mr. Atallah's request.

Traffic department to check cars

AMMAN (Petra) — The Traffic Department Monday announced that a search campaign throughout the Kingdom on various types of vehicles will start next week. It said that the campaign aims to ensure that the vehicles are road worthy and capable of facing the winter season. The department said that traffic policemen would be focusing attention on the condition of head and rear lights, the brakes and the windshield wipers. It said that the campaign was necessary in view of the fact that road accidents tend to increase in winter time. It noted that there were 2,165 road during last month causing accidents the death of 27 persons and the injury of 820 others.

Khalaf receives Canadian envoy

AMMAN (Petra) — Industry and Trade Minister Rima Khalaf reviewed with Canada's ambassador to Jordan, Andrew Robinson, arrangements of a visit to Jordan by the Prime Minister of the Ontario province in the first week of January. The minister also discussed with the ambassador ways to bolster economic and trade ties between Canada and Jordan and called on Canada to buy Jordanian products like phosphate and potash.

Labour ministry to step up inspection

AMMAN (Petra) — Questions related to controlling and organising the employment of guest workers in Jordan were discussed at a meeting Monday. Labour Minister Khaled Ghazawi put special emphasis on the intensification of visits to various organisations by labour ministry inspectors.

Self-rule talks today

(Continued from page 1)

Mr. Ben-Ami declined to comment on the Oslo talks.

Mr. Peres told reporters Monday that "interesting proposals were presented on both sides," and noted that the agreement to continue the talks this week was positive.

The foreign minister declined to give further details. Israeli newspaper Yedioth Ahronoth called the dispute over the border crossings a major stumbling bloc and said Israel rejected a Palestinian compromise proposal, submitted in Oslo, to control the border crossings electronically.

A Peres aide told AFP: "There is no serious crisis. A compromise should be found in the coming days. We expect Arafat to be more flexible."

The Israeli press has reported that Israel is counting on the influence of Arab countries — including Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco — on the PLO to produce a compromise.

Israeli ministers have rallied behind Mr. Rabin's refusal to budge on the border dispute, but made it clear that if the PLO ceded control to Israel then concessions could be made, notably on the size of the Jericho area.

In Oslo, a Norwegian

mediator said he believed Israel and the PLO would be able to break the impasse.

"The compromise proposals which the partners have taken home to Tunis and Israel must be taken up with Arafat and Rabin," Deputy Norwegian Foreign Minister Jan Egeland said.

"We hope and believe they can agree in a few days on a final accord," said Mr. Egeland, host of the 24-hour talks in a mansion in south-east Norway which ended on Sunday night.

He told NRK national radio that the Israelis and the PLO had made "clear progress."

"A list of subjects were discussed, many suggestions were presented," a brief joint statement said after the talks.

Reformists

(Continued from page 1)

differing views.

"Fourth... the majority of those who supported the agreement principles during the Central Committee's meeting, actually made their support contingent on the improvement of the leadership's performance, consolidating the Palestinian abilities and utilising Palestinian expertise."

Regent puts added emphasis on Al al Bait University

MAFRAQ (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, Monday urged the Royal Commission for the Al al Bait University in Mafraq to call for and organise an international conference to raise funds for the university's future plans and to give due care to the subject of Zakat (alms for the poor) among other matters.

"In the coming week, I will be meeting with you to discuss various issues of concern to the university which will open its doors as of the coming academic year," said Prince Hassan in addressing the commission members.

In his four-hour meeting with the commission, Prince

Hassan said that the creation of the Al al Bait University was in implementation of the desire and the directives of the Dean of the Hashemite Family, His Majesty King Hussein.

Reminding his audience that the King had taken the decision to set up this university in August of 1992, the Prince said that the university ought to give due attention to Islamic culture and should employ scholars and teachers from various Islamic countries.

Dr. Mohammad Bakhit, the university president, addressed the commission's first meeting saying that since April 24, committees have been set up to take charge of various faculties' needs.

The university, which will initially have the three colleges of arts and sciences, Islamic studies and economy and administrative sciences, will also include three institutes to award post graduate studies in Islamic arts and architecture, languages and computer science, noted Dr. Bakhit.

He said that a special committee, which is currently studying principles for the enrolment of students from various Islamic countries, will take into account that those to be accepted should have done well in their secondary school studies and obtained distinguished standards of education.

Dr. Bakhit announced that the university is currently setting up laboratories and an astronomy centre.

Heads of the various committees presented an outline about their achievements and progress in the development of programmes for the faculties and the institutes.

The Royal Commission, which is chaired by Prince Hassan, groups Dr. Abdul Aziz Al Khayat, Sheikh Izzeddin Al Khatib Al Tamimi, Dr. Nassereddin Al Assad, and Dr. Hani Al Mulki.

According to Royal directives, the university will focus on research and studies in Islamic affairs and Arabic language.

WHO stresses role of media in providing health services

AMMAN (Petra) — The World Health Organisation (WHO) Monday called on workers in the fields of health and media to work together, noting that the private and the public sectors have a duty to join hands and complement the work of each other in providing health services.

The call came from WHO information director Adel Salahi who stressed that WHO has been taking a number of initiatives in the course of a drive to promote health for individuals and societies alike.

Dr. Salahi was addressing the opening session of a four-day meeting organised by the WHO office in cooperation

with the health ministry in Amman, to review patterns of healthy life.

His call was echoed by Dr. Ahmad Salah, director of Occupational Safety Department at the Health Ministry, who said that the media was the language of communication among nations in modern age and it addresses social health political issues of concern to all societies.

"No one can deny the fact that the media plays a very vital role in conveying information to the largest sector of society in the shortest period of time and therefore, the media should be utilised to serve the public in the health field"

noted Dr. Salah.

The seminar was opened by Health Minister Abdul Rahim Malhas who stressed the effect of the media in bringing about changes in practices related to health.

"Nearly 70 per cent of education acquired by children is gained through the media and 30 per cent comes from parents and schools" said the minister.

According to the Health Ministry, the four-day seminar will tackle health problems, changing health malpractices, utilising the media to provide health-related information and protection from communicable diseases.

Minister outlines challenges on environmental issues

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan has been giving due concern to the protection of the environment and particularly, its meagre water resources and has set up a department for safeguarding the environment, according to Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment Minister Ahmad Aqaleh.

Addressing the opening session of a three-day regional seminar, the minister said it was incumbent on Jordan to

give attention to its water resources which have been depleted over the years as a result of direct pollution on the one hand and the growing population and the flood of refugees on the other.

The meeting will be examining consequences of development and industrial projects on the water resources and will be reviewing social economic and development issues related to the environment and the impact of projects on water resources.

Jordan, along with the rest of world countries, faces serious challenges to the environment as well as the continual depletion of natural resources, the consequences of industrial development, and the random construction of housing units and factories in addition to the reduction of the arable land, noted Mr. Aqaleh.

Noting that Jordan, like many other nations, was facing adverse effects on water resources as a result of pollution, the minister said that the widespread use of fertilisers and pesticides and their effect on

the soil and water are to blame for much of the pollution.

In 1982, "he said," the Department of Environment was created to take charge of plans and studies related to the implementation of the national strategy on the environment which was endorsed last year and which gave due attention to the adverse consequences of projects on the environment."

Among the main tasks of the department, the minister added, was to monitor the quality of water, a vital issue for Jordan which has meagre resources.

Among the speakers were Ali Attiga, the U.N. regional representative, who called for continual process of training specialists in environmental affairs and Dr. Mohammad Bani Hani, Ministry of Water Secretary General, who presented a working paper dealing with the social and cultural effects of water projects.

Apart from Jordan the meetings are being attended by delegates from Algeria Bahrain Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq Libya, Qatar, Syria and Tunisia.

Acting premier receives Qatari minister

AMMAN (Petra) — Acting Prime Minister Maan Abu Nowar conferred in his office Monday with the visiting Qatari Education Minister Abdul Aziz Turki on educational cooperation between Qatar and Jordan.

The Qatari minister and his Jordanian counterpart, who attended the meeting, briefed Dr. Abu Nowar on the outcome of the talks which focused on educational affairs.

The acting premier and the Qatari minister reviewed Jordanian-Qatari relations in general and the cultural and educational cooperation in particular and discussed future cooperation and the exchange of expertise.

Earlier in the day, Education Minister Khaled Omari accompanied the Qatari guest on a visit to a number of educational institutions in the Irbid Governorate. They first visited Al Huson Vocational Centre for Girls where students acquire training in printing, nursing and other crafts.

During a visit to Yarmouk University, the Qatari minister learnt about the educational and extracurricular programmes offered by the university.

The Qatari minister has already met with Dr. Saeed Tell, deputy prime minister and minister of higher education, and discussed with him the programmes and plans of the ministry.

Other institutions toured earlier by the Qatari minister included the University of Jordan and the National Centre for Educational Development and Research.

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By Rami G. Khouri

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Homework before GATT

JORDAN'S BID for membership of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the world's trade regulator, appears to run in line with its economic liberalisation policy in conformity with International Monetary Fund (IMF) guidelines. Yet such a step requires more than a diplomatic initiative spearheaded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Unlike other memberships in various international fora, association with GATT should be more than a political stunt diplomatically prepared for. Before discussing this Jordanian move with ambassadors of the European Community (EC) and the other major industrial countries, it would be more prudent to examine the full economic implications of joining such a club at home first, particularly with the people and institutions that would be most directly affected by the decision to join. Close coordination and consultation with the Chambers of Commerce and Industry in Amman appears to be a sine qua non for an initiative of this magnitude. For it is one thing to seek full integration in world trade and commerce as per the principles and objectives of GATT and quite another to do so after reflecting economically about starting moves in that direction.

Judging by information available to this newspaper, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is conducting the negotiations for joining GATT without the knowledge and participation of the other governmental and private concerns.

Accordingly, while welcoming the consideration of this membership by the government, we believe that such a decision must be preceded by full study of its fallout on Jordanian infant industries and business especially at a time when Jordanian industrial production still expects some protection till it is able to stand on its own feet. After all, only countries which have developed industrially are capable to perform well under the rules and regulations of GATT. It is no secret that the agreement is geared to service the needs of the major industrial powers and not countries like Jordan. This is not to suggest that the door for membership should be foreclosed for all times. Rather, this is a call for cool and sober calculation and complete scrutiny of the provision of GATT. One wonders whether the entire articles of the agreement have been reckoned with already in preparation for full partnership in it. It would be necessary therefore to assemble a national conference in Jordan to examine the viability of such a move to be attended by all concerned agencies in the country, both official and private. Otherwise, Jordan would be jumping into the unknown for nothing more than a sensational diplomatic feat.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

THE RESUMPTION of the PLO-Israeli negotiations in Oslo means that there has been a setback for the Arab-Israeli peace talks altogether, despite the world community's continued backing for progress to end the Arab-Israeli conflict, said Al Ra'i Arabic daily Monday, Washington, which is supposedly sponsoring the peace process, is to blame for the faltering PLO-Israeli negotiations because it has been shirking its responsibilities and retracting its support to ensure the success of the peace deal, the paper added. There is no doubt, it said, that Washington's retreat would encourage the Israelis to persist in imposing their terms for any settlement with the Arabs and in particular with the Palestinians. It is also regrettable to hear PLO leaders declaring their understanding of Israel's special security needs as they seem to have forgotten that it was because of the security claims of the Jewish state that Zionists occupied the whole of Palestine and parts of other Arab countries, conquered the paper. If the Palestinians retreat from their demands to have control over the borders and the Jericho area subject to the authority rule, they offer the Israelis further encouragement to bide on to their intransigent position and could lead to further Palestinian concessions, added the paper. The paper demanded that the world community rectify the course of the negotiations by entrusting the whole task of achieving peace to the United Nations whose credibility should be safeguarded.

SAWT AL SHAAB Arabic daily criticised the U.S. administration for its open hostile policy against Iraq despite Baghdad's full commitment to and abidance by the world legality and the U.N. resolutions. The paper said that Washington and its allies are maintaining the unjust embargo on the Iraqi people not even reducing its effects on the innocent civilians through a gradual reduction of the sanctions. The paper said that Washington is maintaining its hostile stand against Iraq at a time when it is condoning the barbaric aggression on the Muslim people of Bosnia and the Serbian war crimes against the innocent population. Furthermore, the European countries continue to take an indifferent stand towards the situation in Bosnia, added the writer. It said that both the United States and Europe adopt a double standard not only in the case of Iraq and Bosnia but also in the question of forcing world nations to join the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty while allowing the Israelis to ignore such treaty and possess weapons of mass destruction with which it can threaten Arab nations. The paper said that by imposing impossible conditions on Iraq, in exchange of ending the embargo, the United States is exercising an injustice unprecedented in world history.

The View from Fourth Circle

The Middle East, Russia and dreams of chocolate ducks

I have suggested previously that the Middle East and North Africa region is in the midst of a large-scale historical transformation whose magnitude and severity will match the changes underway in the former Soviet bloc — in the sense that both positive and negative trends will touch every aspect of society (political, religious, geo-strategic, economic, social, cultural, intellectual, demographic and even the make-up and borders of countries).

Both regions are emerging from a half-century-long state of political, intellectual and cultural deep-freeze that had seen virtually all meaningful power concentrated in the hands of state authorities that were in turn dominated by individuals or by small groups of people along with their cousins, friends and guards. Freed from the distortions and constraints of the bizarre 20th century, the peoples of both regions are now feverishly engaged in two simultaneous processes:

1. They are adjusting to, and compensating for, the many failures and excesses of the past by trying to embrace political liberalisation, economic adjustment, private entrepreneurship, activism by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and community groups, public-private sector partnerships, regional cooperation and integration and more mutually satisfying relations with foreign powers.

2. They are undergoing political restructuring and national reconfiguration that seek to foster political cultures that are more stable and satisfying because they are more responsive, participatory and accountable. A fundamental redistribution of power is underway among the basic constituent groups of society, including the ruling political elites, the military, the prevailing religious establishment, commercial powers, professionals and technocrats and religious/ethnic minorities.

Those two processes of adjusting for past errors and formulating new structures for the future are likely to result in four broad trends, which are already evident in both regions:

1. A relative decentralisation of political and economic power from the central government to the provinces, the private sector, NGOs, local communities, political action groups and special interest groups (the protection of the environment and human rights, for example, are being handled far more effectively by private groups and NGOs than by the public sectors in both regions).

2. A rise in tribalism, and the politics of religion and ethnicity. People unable to turn to the state for their basic human needs — identity, security, survival and a sense of hope for the future — are turning to ancient and well established sources of national identity and durability, including tribalism, ethnicity, religion and other patriarchal forces that have defined Russian Orthodox culture and the Middle East and

North Africa for thousands of years. (I use the term "tribalism" in its broadest sense, to include religions, ethnic groups, clans and extended families and other traditional patriarchal structures that unite people on the basis of their blood ties and spirituality).

3. The strength and possible eventual dominance of commercialism as an ideology and way of life. Free market forces and regional and international private capital may take over the responsibility of the provision of basic services from some of the government agencies that have been unable to do the job (note, for example, how the private sector in Jordan is playing a greater role in the provision of clean water, quality education and health care and more credible/professional television and radio services). This takes place at a time when economic and social disparities have increased sharply due to past failures and excesses, both within individual countries and among different countries throughout the two regions.

Because of substantial fiscal constraints and management deficiencies, and some incompetence, government agencies may not be able to properly regulate the power of commercial market forces, especially in view of the traditional Middle Eastern convergence of interests between the power aristocracy of commercial wealth and officialdom. The triumph of commercialism will bring fabulous wealth to a small minority, but will result in further quality of life disparities and a substantial increase in the number of families living on the edge of, or in, poverty; the emergence of a permanent and perhaps growing class of marginalised people will promote frustration, fear and the politics of despair.

4. Consequently, demagoguery, authoritarianism and autocracy will increase in some places in the short term, often disguised as a return to traditional tribal forms of social and political identity. This is happening already among growing numbers of marginalised, suffering and desperate people who will sacrifice modern political rights and instead turn to autocratic demagogues who promise to provide them with those things they yearn for — whether bread, heating oil, a symbol that makes their hearts flutter, or a revival of their sense of human worth and dignity.

We saw this clearly in Russia in last week's elections, with the strong showing by Vladimir Zhirinovskiy; it is also obvious in Serbia, and in several Soviet republics that have brought back to power ex-communists and/or strong nationalists. Boris Yeltsin's balancing act between democratic pluralism and Russian authoritarianism also manifests the attraction that autocracy and demagoguery hold out for both leaders and led. It is also evident in western cultures where rightists and

xenophobes have gained strength by playing to people's fears.

A similar trend is also prevalent in many Middle Eastern countries, where the rigours of adjusting to new, more democratic and pluralistic power-sharing systems is too threatening, confusing, or exhausting for many people. It is distressing, but perhaps not surprising, to hear some people in Jordan speak of democratisation in terms so sceptical that they verge on sarcasm, ridicule and even disdain. There is a yearning in the land, among some people, for the old days and the old ways — when unemployment was low, the government provided everyone with jobs and subsidised food, the dinar was widely overvalued and life was easy. But there is danger in such yearning; for as in Russia, so in the Arab Middle East there are Yeltsins and Zhirinovskys who will speak of democracy but practice autocracy, and exploit the challenging emotional environment that prevails in order to gain political power. And there are many people who would cheer them on wildly, dreaming of glory, jobs, contracts and reasonably priced chocolate ducks imported from Austria or Switzerland.

The Middle East and the ex-Soviet bloc both suffer a troubling contradiction: while they are trying to forge a new, more modern political balance and power structure, they are simultaneously reverting to older, traditional social structures that are patriarchal and even authoritarian. This is an inevitable short-term experience by all societies in the midst of profound structural change; but it is one that we have to keep a close eye on, because it contains the following colossal irony that is critical to grasp and to monitor.

The three main forces that have fuelled political liberalisation in the Arab World in the last decade have been Islamic politics, a leftist/pan-Arab sentiment and a broad, pragmatic, quasi-technocratic desire for some sort of Arab/Islamic democratisation. The danger now is that these three constructive forces may be discredited and labelled failures by people whose daily life conditions are so vulnerable and precarious that they have neither the patience nor the financial or caloric reserves to see through the processes of liberalisation and democratisation to a satisfactory conclusion. Hunger, hopelessness and national humiliation are potent forces; they are gnawing their way through the soft underbelly of many societies in the Arab World and the ex-Soviet bloc.

In both the Middle East and the ex-Soviet Union, the struggle for democracy has only now started in earnest. In both regions, we should beware of old men praising democracy, but promising chocolate ducks.

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UNRWA continues noble mission

By Pascal B. Karny

UNRWA's continued existence confirms the saying that the temporary endures. UNRWA, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, was established by the U.N. General Assembly on Dec. 8, 1949 and started its operations actually on the first of May 1950. It was created on a temporary basis to provide the Palestine refugees with shelters and food pending their return to their homes in Palestine in accordance with General Assembly Resolution 194 of Dec. 11, 1948. This resolution has never been implemented because of Israel's refusal to comply with it. As the return of the refugees was not realised and the Palestine problem has not been solved, the General Assembly had to extend UNRWA's life every three years. Its mandate is now extended up to June 1996.

It may be a good omen that UNRWA's mandate was extended up to 1996 as this extension covers more than the two-year period, at the end of which permanent status negotiations between the PLO and Israel will take place on the issues of Jerusalem, the refugees, the Jewish settlements as stipulated in the PLO-Israel accord signed in Washington

Sept. 13. Therefore, UNRWA would play an important role in the economic and social development, and stability of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. UNRWA's Commissioner-General Ilter Turkmen rightly observes in his annual report that "It is clear that the recent developments will have an impact on UNRWA's operations and programmes in different ways, especially in the initial period. There is no doubt that from now on the other programmes and specialised agencies of the United Nations system, and the World Bank, will have an important contribution to make to the economic and social development in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and therefore towards political stability. Because of the scale of its presence in the area, its largely Palestinian staff and its historical experience, UNRWA will, I hope, be a major contributor to this combined effort. At the same time, the need for continued assistance to the Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria should not be overlooked."

As usual, the annual report clearly shows that working in a region plagued with bloody conflicts, UNRWA has been all along in an unenviable situation. In its daily work and activities it has always endeavoured to strike a balance

between its humanitarian mission as mandated by the U.N. and the sovereignty and interests of the host countries. During the past 43 years UNRWA had to be very diplomatic in its dealings with the host states, particularly Israel that occupied the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967.

UNRWA had no alternative but to deal pragmatically with Israel. An agreement was concluded on June 14, 1967 through the exchange of letters between the then Commissioner-General Laurence Michelmore and Micael Comay, then political advisor at the Israeli foreign ministry. This agreement laid down the general principles of cooperation between UNRWA and Israel, to enable the former to carry out its humanitarian services in the occupied territories without hindrance. It was specifically provided in the agreement that: "This cooperation implies no commitment or position by UNRWA with regard to the status of any of the areas in question, or of any instrument relating to them, but is concerned solely with the continuation of its humanitarian task."

Notwithstanding, this agreement, UNRWA has very often protested to Israel on the violations of its privileges and immunities committed by Israeli

forces whether as regards UNRWA's premises and property or with respect to its staff in contravention to the Convention on the Immunities and Privileges of the United Nations to which Israel is a party. With the start of the intifada in December 1987, Israeli violations have intensified.

The realisation by Israel that the intifada is a very tough nut to crack may be one of the causes which led Israel to come to terms with the PLO and conclude the PLO-Israel accord of September 13, 1993.

Reading through UNRWA's annual report one realises the Israeli brutal treatment of Palestinian in the occupied territories. The states that 200 Palestinians were killed and 5,200 injured in clashes with Israeli troops during the reporting period (1992-1993) and 150 houses in the West Bank and Gaza Strip were partially or completely sealed or destroyed. A new feature was the firing of rockets and the use of explosives against Palestinians houses during search operations. Approximately 1,500 people who had their 130 houses destroyed lost their homes and most of their possessions. UNRWA protested against those acts as well as against incidents of sniper fire from observation posts which in many occasions resulted in the death and injury of adults

and children even without immediate danger to the soldiers involved. There were 263 incursions into UNRWA installations by the Israeli security forces. UNRWA ambulances and medical services staff were harassed and frequently shot at.

Two staff were killed by Israeli security forces. A nurse was shot in the back of the head while assisting a wounded youth in Rafah and an UNRWA teacher was shot and killed standing outside a warehouse in Rafah. Sixty-four staff members were arrested and held in detention without trial. Sixteen were among more than 400 Palestinians deported to South Lebanon in December 1992. Both international and local staff continued to be subjected to various forms of mistreatment including beatings, threats, insults, intimidation and temporary detention by Israeli troops.

It is hoped that in the course of the implementation of the PLO-Israel accord, UNRWA would be able to carry out its

work more smoothly in the occupied territories, provided both parties will unreservedly support and enhance its activities in the fields of education, health, vocational training and social services as well as its programme developments for the benefit of the Palestinians to enable them to rise to the challenge of building a state in the rich Palestinian diaspora will participate in this grand project, provided, of course that Israel is sincere in withdrawing from the occupied territories and leaves the Palestinians free to build their state on their territory.

UNRWA has been serving about 2.8 million Palestinians throughout its area of operations for decades. Credit must be due to it for its excellent performance in all aspects of Palestine refugees lives. It indeed deserves full financial support from the international community which can be assured that its contributions will be well spent and bear fruits.

LETTERS

Economy tips

To the Editor:

Your editorial entitled "The Job of Creating Jobs" (Jordan Times, Dec. 14, 1993) merits a great deal of public esteem and interest. It presents the reader with an unequivocal handling of our Jordanian economy at a time when nobody can afford to ignore the growing importance of this factor. The curtain is once and for all drawn on all that is purely theoretical and inconsequential.

Having presented a down-to-earth perspective so pointedly, the editorial seeks to underscore the key obstacle which has overburdened our national economy for some time, namely unemployment. It is indeed high time that this problem should be addressed effectively and proper strategies devised to combat its negative implications.

Due credit and respect must be paid to the pains-taking efforts exerted so far to overcome this agonising issue with the help of the good offices of both the public and the private sectors. The two sectors are called upon to work together on the basis of the Royal Letter of appointment towards removing all obstacles on the way to further cooperation and coordination.

On the one hand, the public sector should spare no efforts to activate the economy by trying to make pass legislations warranting appropriate entrepreneurial incentives and some tax exemptions, especially for enterprises putting job creation high on their agenda. On the other hand, the private sector should increase its involvement in the economic activities in terms of increasing production and boosting exports, which is as much a right as a responsibility.

Major, unprecedented, breakthroughs have to be made in the form of cutting public spending, bolstering remittances from Jordanian expatriates, expanding the production base and boosting local and foreign investments in Jordan. Perhaps what is also intended is to put more funds into oil prospecting efforts which will hopefully reduce Jordan's oil bill within the framework of the overall state budget.

Kamal H. Farsouni,
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Amman 11121.

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any subject they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication, however, should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld only upon request and under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing. The newspaper is not responsible for the return of unused manuscripts.

Kashmir and the 'happiness' of its people

By Khushwant Singh

NEW DELHI — When I say Kashmir I mean the Valley of the Jhelum and its preponderantly Muslim population but exclude Jammu and Ladakh which are largely non-Muslim. It is this seventy-mile long and thirty-mile wide valley whose future is at stake. It has been at stake ever since Kashmir acceded to India.

Since we had the wholehearted support of Sheikh Abdullah and his National Conference we had legal right to support our view that the accession was voluntary. We agreed to grant it special status. We also agreed to have a plebiscite when conditions returned to normality. In our view, conditions were never normal and we put the plebiscite out of our minds. We began to assert that Kashmir was an integral part of India. Neither our muck-involved neighbour Pakistan which took over a large chunk of the state nor a majority of Kashmiri Muslims accepted our contention.

state put under governor's rule.

People who have visited beauty spots in the Valley of the Jhelum and have Kashmiri Muslim friends will bear me out that right from the beginning they were reluctant to admit they were Indians. Though they carried Indian passports, they referred to us as "Yun Indians" and to themselves as "we Kashmiris". We poured in thousands of crores of rupees in the valley. It

proved a bottomless pit and made no visible difference in the poor standards of living of the common people.

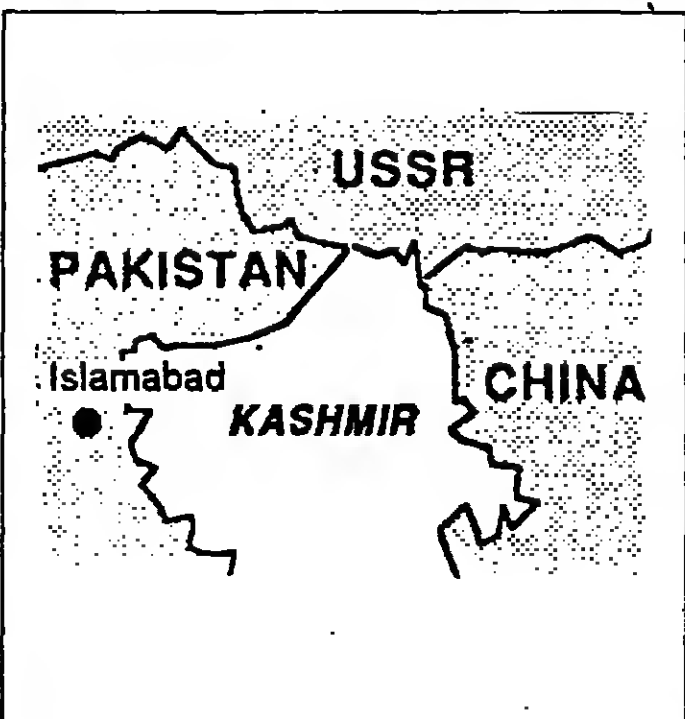
In times of stress we sent in our army and paramilitary forces to put them down. They accused us of repression and gross violation of human rights. Though undoubtedly exaggerated it cannot be denied that human rights have been increasingly violated. Not many people put faith in the Human Rights Commission re-

cently set up by our government. Its Chairman Justice Ranganath Mishra and most of its members do not inspire confidence. Since the focal point of human rights violation is our part of Kashmir its people will dismiss the commission as "Operation Eye-wash."

What can we do to solve the problem of the valley without provoking adverse reaction in other parts of the country? First, face the facts squarely. One fact is that we have totally forfeited the sympathies of Kashmiri Muslims, the other is that we have no moral right to impose ourselves by physical force on a people who do not want us. The third fact is that the valley is too small and too reliant on tourist traffic and sale of handicrafts to become an independent state.

At best it can become an autonomous entity whose existence is guaranteed jointly by its neighbours — India and Pakistan. As a wise and mature nation we should stop parroting about Kashmir being an integral part of India and the only solution being under the Simla Pact: it has produced nothing but hot air. And finally, we must not lose sight of the fact that what matters most is the happiness of the people of the valley.

The writer is an Indian journalist and author. This article is reprinted from the Pakistani daily Dawn.



هذه الصحيفة

Features

JORDAN TIMES, TUESDAY, DECEMBER 21, 1993

Fahrelnissa Zeid A glimpse at the works of a larger-than-life figure

By Ica Wabbbeh
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Jordanian art lovers have the once-in-a-lifetime chance to see works by the founder of the Royal Institute of Fine Arts, Fahrelnissa Zeid, never shown before and which are part of the private collection of Prince Raad Bin Zeid.

The exhibition of prints and drawings, at Darat Al Funun, offers a glimpse at the life behind the works, a prolific life of creation, change, experiment and development that took the artist from the Middle East (Turkey) to Europe and back (Jordan) to complete the circle of a fulfilled and meaningful life.

Fahrelnissa Zeid's works and some posters accompanying them take the viewer into the periods of creation and progression that can so easily be pointed out because of their style, colour, mood and time frame.

The works start in the 1920s in Istanbul, where the talented artist was studying art. Portraits, arabesques, an idyllic Bosphorus convey the feeling of a serene time, of a simpler world and of the Orient.

Then, in the 50s in France, the artist starts using China ink and the abstract. The style is still figurative, but, to quote art critic Andre Parinaud, "between London and Paris, Fahrelnissa Zeid underwent an essential change that enabled her to assert herself in the force of abstraction...She was ready to understand and to experience the abstract adventure that the artists of the 50s were just discovering."

By the middle of the decade, the artist's works are still academic, but also abstract, and include lithographs and China inks.

In the late 60s she experiments with paleocrystals. The work is completely abstract.



Portrait by Fahrelnissa Zeid on display at Darat Al Funun

In the 70s, the figurative works offer a very intimate glimpse of Fahrelnissa Zeid who was behind the large, formal oils presented to the public, one similar being exhibited at the Darat Al Funun.

The late 70s see the artist in Amman, where a retrospective of her art is exhibited at the

Royal Cultural Centre in 1983. The last period has both exuberant colours and pale, almost pastel oils. The artist draws the love for life, colour,

movement which, throughout her life, was the mark of her work.

In 1960, in Dialogues on Art with Edouard Roditi, she says: "When I paint, I feel the sap (of life) rising, flooding me, transforming itself into forms and colours...as if I were a sort of medium that gathers or transmits the vibrations of all that is, or is not, in the world."

And the power of love for life is overpowering. Her unique and original art is expressed by the line she masters to the point of creating the impossible.

She makes the line curl, twist, bend, loop, meet, cross, overlap, fill spaces or shrink to a dot, zig-zag, crisscross, stop whimsically or go on for ever to form abstract figures beyond which, if you let your imagination fly, you see faces, eyes, portraits, fruit and animals, red magma, flowing lava,

gigantic constructions, beautiful landscapes or biological representations.

"It is this power to communicate a fusion and thrill of forms and colours... through the precision of the drawing, through the play of a strange arabesque etching several lines of force...which seems her essential contribution to the field of abstract art," says Andre Parinaud.

Fahrelnissa Zeid's portraits are masterfully done. They are so real that at times you expect the model to smile or turn its eyes onto the viewer.

Close-ups are deceiving. Only viewing some works from afar puts things into perspective, defines shapes and forms and gives the overall meaning of the whole.

Mothers holding children are recurrent. The motherhood spirit and pride are obvious in the portraits of her

children.

All along the more intimate abstracts, the artist was doing the big oils that were exhibited to the public.

One such big oil that catches the eye at the entrance is a black and white universe of geometric figures, sniggling lines, falling stars and lit windows blinking friendly in the darkness.

Also attracting the attention with their enthusiastic colours and movements are the oils of the latest period of the artist, that of twirling dervishes in brilliant red, yellow, blue, green and purple colours, with high fezes, moving in a frenetic dance, and of turbaned figures kneeling on a carpet in some sort of a ritual.

Fahrelnissa Zeid left behind her zest for life, her talent and

many disciples. But it is difficult to describe in constraining words this larger-than-life figure.

As for her works, perhaps Jacques Lassaing's words would do some justice: "This oeuvre that resembles no other is not easy to categorise according to current movements. Abstract painting? Non-figurative art? An alternative art? The painting of Fahrelnissa Zeid is force in action, a perpetual state of becoming."

The works from the private collection will be on display until January 15, 1994. Other works of this great artist are part of the permanent exhibition at Darat Al Funun where they, along with those of other Jordanian artists, can be seen at any time.

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Report: Iraq, Western oil companies hold talks in Jordan

NICOSIA, Cyprus (AP) — Senior Iraqi oil officials have been meeting in Jordan with senior executives of major Western oil companies to discuss production sharing when sanctions are lifted, the Middle East Economic Survey (MEES) reported Monday.

In the past, Iraq always has insisted that such high-level talks be held only in Baghdad. Foreign oil companies therefore have tended to send only junior representatives to meetings in Europe or Jordan.

"It can only be assumed that the American firms have received some sort of green light from Washington before holding such senior-level meetings as have recently taken place in Amman," the newsletter wrote.

The weekly economic survey, which is published in *Micrasia*, said the discussions involving American and Euro-

pean oil companies over the past three weeks covered possibilities for both production sharing agreements and technical service contracts.

The newsletter said it understood that the government might be willing to settle for only a minority share in certain joint ventures, because it was keen to maximise revenue from oil taxes and royalties.

Areas being discussed include discovered but as yet unexploited oilfields in south Iraq, together with exploration and appraisal of other regions such as the western desert, the central area of the country and the northwestern region near the Syrian border.

In addition to extracting oil, there are lucrative contracts in the offing for repairing Iraq's war-damaged oil industry.

Iraq has been holding talks with foreign oil firms since the summer of 1991, mainly the

French Total and ELF
Aquitaine and the Italian com-
pany AGIP.

A French parliament member who travelled to Baghdad last week to escort two released Frenchmen back home said American businessmen

were back in Baghdad preparing to sell their wares again. She said France was behind in the competition because Paris was scrupulously observing the embargo.

Iraq sits on at least 100 billion barrels of oil reserves.

second in the world after Saudi Arabia. Before the Gulf crisis, Iraq was producing around 3.2 million barrels a day, with some 2.7 million barrels a day for export.

administration wants Baghdad to abide by tough new conditions in exchange for lifting U.N. sanctions on Iraqi oil exports.

organise Kuwait as an independent country and stop persecuting Kurds and Shiite Muslims, the newspaper reported.

The oew requirements would be in addition to the Security Council's current demands for Iraq to disarm and

let the United Nations monitor its military industries, conditions set at the end of the Gulf war.

Iraq desperately needs the revenue from oil exports to feed its people and rebuild from the damage of the war.

Abu Dhabi in a \$9b claim against BCCI officials

ABU DHABI (R)— The Abu Dhabi shareholders in the failed Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI) filed a \$9 billion civil claim Monday against 13 former BCCI executives already being tried in the emirate on criminal charges.

A statement sent to Reuters said the claim had been made on behalf of the majority shareholders — the ruling family of Abu Dhabi and the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA).

ing \$9 billion in damages for mismanaged and stolen funds," the statement, issued on behalf of the shareholders, added.

BCCI, once one of the world's largest private banking groups, had over \$20 billion in assets and branches in 69 countries before it was shot down amid fraud allegations. The majority shareholders owned 71.4 per cent of BCCI at the time.

The civil suit, filed in Abu Dhabi Criminal Court, named BCCI's Pakistani founder, Agha Hassan Abedi, his deputy Swaleh Naqvi, Ziauddin Akbar and 10 other BCCI ex-

executives who are on trial in Abu Dhabi, the statement said.

"The civil claim seeks to recoup funds entrusted to Mr. Abedi and Mr. Naqvi for investment by them on behalf of the ruling family and ADIA," it quoted the shareholders as saying.

The civil claim is based on the criminal charges lodged against the 13 defendants last July. It will be heard with the criminal trial which is due to resume Dec. 25.

ing documents, concealing the bank's deficits and losses and approving false loans.

Mr. Abedi and Mr. Akbar, who was sentenced in London in September to six years imprisonment for his part in the misuse of more than \$1.2 billion, are being tried in their absence.

Along with Mr. Abedi, Mr. Naqvi is charged with "using funds entrusted to them by the shareholders and depositors.. in the settlement of fictitious

Sultan Al Nahayan and his son, Crown Prince Khalifa Bin Zaid Al Nahayan, to cover losses made by the bank.

The majority shareholders describe themselves as the biggest victims of the alleged fraud.

The civil claim alleges that over \$3 billion was stolen from the portfolios of Sheikh Zaid and Sheikh Khalifa.

I: alleges they misled the owners into believing the depleted fund was worth over \$4 billion as of December 1989, when in fact it was worth only about \$250 million.

The statement said if the portfolio had been conservatively invested in dollar bonds it would now be worth \$7 billion.

In addition to the portfolio and other losses the suit seeks to recover \$805 million for the rulers' stake in the bank, \$100 million for ADIA's shares and \$900 million for ADIA's deposits, a representative for the shareholders said.


[illegible]

Financial Markets

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Jordan Times



Currency	New York Close	Tokyo Close
	Using 7/12/93	Using 20/12/93
Sterling Pound*	1.4860	1.4870
Deutsche Mark	1.7094	1.7082
Swiss Franc	1.4615	1.4605
French Franc	5.8380	5.8385**
Japanese Yen	110.20	110.27
European Currency Unit	1.1303	1.1285**

Forecurrency Interest Rates **Date: 20/12/1993**

Currency	1 MTH	3 MTHS	6 MTHS	12 MTHS
U.S. Dollar	3.18	3.18	3.34	3.68
Sterling Pound	5.56	5.25	5.25	5.12
Deutsche Mark	6.50	6.12	5.75	5.31
Swiss Franc	4.50	4.25	4.00	3.78
French Franc	6.59	6.40	6.06	5.50
Japanese Yen	2.37	2.06	1.93	1.81
European Currency Unit	6.75	6.45	6.06	5.68

Currency	Bid	Offer
Bahamian Dollar	1.8370	1.8710
Belizean Lira*	0.040575	0.041715
Saudi Riyal	0.1855	0.1885
Kenyan Shilling	2.2250	2.3200
Qatari Riyal	0.1902	0.1916
Egyptian Pound	0.2050	0.2222
Omani Riyal	1.7900	1.8250
UAE Dirham	0.1902	0.1916
Greek Drachma*	0.2820	0.3335
Cypriot Pound	1.3475	1.3865

LONDON EXCHANGE RATES

LONDON (R) — Following are the buying and selling rates for leading world currencies and gold against the dollar at midsession on the London Foreign Exchange and bullion markets Monday.

U.S. \$1.00 costs	1.3397/07	Canadian dollar
	1.7115/25	Deutschmarks
	1.9175/85	Dutch guilders
	1.4597/07	Swiss francs
	35.65/69	Belgian francs
	5.8335/85	French francs
	1684.3/5.8	Italian lire
	110.46/56	Japanese yen
	8.3996/96	Swedish crowns
	7.4250/00	Norwegian crowns
	6.7038/88	Danish crowns
Base sterling	\$1.4860/70	
Base ounce of gold	\$389.80/390.20	

One sterling	\$1.4860/70
One ounce of gold	\$389.80/390.20

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Pro-Yeltsin bloc narrows gap with Zhirinovsky party

MOSCOW (Agencies) — Russia's main pro-reform bloc has narrowed the gap with the ultranationalist party led by Vladimir Zhirinovsky, but still remains as distant second in parliamentary voting, election officials said Monday.

More than a week after Russians voted on Dec. 12, final election results still have not been released. Election workers are continuing to sift through the mounds of paper ballots cast in the multiparty voting.

With 214 of 225 constituencies reporting, Zhirinovsky's Liberal Democratic Party led with 23.2 per cent of the voters, followed by Russia's Choice with 15.74 per cent and the Communist Party with 11.89 per cent.

Last Friday, Zhirinovsky had 23.5 per cent, Russia's Choice had 14.8 per cent and the Communists had 13.3 per cent.

The new tallies reflect late vote counting in Moscow, Russia's largest city and a stronghold for Russia's Choice and other supporters of President Boris Yeltsin.

The final figures will determine how the parties split up 225 of the 450 seats set aside in the State Duma for party candidates. Another 225 seats are reserved for candidates elected on an individual basis.

Russia's Choice is expected to pick up enough seats in the individual races to give it the largest number of seats of any

bloc in parliament, but it likely will be far outnumbered by opponents of Yeltsin's political and economic reforms.

Some newspapers have predicted that anti-reform elements will get up to two-thirds of the seats in the Duma, the powerful lower chamber of parliament.

The ITAR-TASS news agency projected that Russia's Choice would wind up with 103 seats total, Mr. Zhirinovsky with 66, the Communists 62 and the anti-Yeltsin Agrarian Party 49. Four other blocs would split 99 seats and unnamed independent candidates would get 70 seats, it said.

Russia's Choice has said it hopes to forge an "anti-fascist coalition" even with the Communists — to stop Zhirinovsky's party, which has pledged to make deep changes in Mr. Yeltsin's reforms and foreign policy.

The Central Election Commission also said Monday that 170 deputies have been elected in 86 constituencies to the Federation Council, the weaker, upper house of parliament.

No elections to the Federation Council took place in the self-declared Republic of Chechnya in southern Russia and two other regions.

The Election Commission Monday officially certified the results on the nationwide constitutional referendum that was held at the same time as the parliamentary voting.

It said Russia's first post-

Soviet constitution was adopted by 58.4 per cent of those who cast ballots. The turnout was 58.2 million people, or 54.8 per cent of Russia's 106 million registered voters.

Mr. Yeltsin called a vote on his draft constitution and the new parliament after disbanding the old hardline parliament Sept. 21.

The constitution, which replaces a 1978 document, greatly strengthens Yeltsin's powers as president and guarantees the right of private land ownership, free speech and religious freedom.

The text of the new constitution will be officially published in the government publications Rossiiskaya Gazeta and Rossiiskiy Vestnik.

Local Russian officials known to want greater autonomy from Moscow for their regions will dominate the Federation Council, final official results showed.

But President Yeltsin was expected to seek strong ties with these regional leaders, despite their goals of decentralisation, in order to counter the influence of communists and nationalists in the State Duma, analysts said.

Central Election Commission officials said 170 deputies were elected to the council from 86 regions including the leader of the Sverdlovsk region, Eduard Rossel, who was sacked by Mr. Yeltsin earlier this year after he upgraded the administrative status of the re-

gion to that of "republic."

The Federation Council has powers to approve changes in borders, to appoint judges to the Constitutional Court and to the Supreme Court and to approve presidential decrees on introduction of a state of emergency and martial law.

It also has the right to return any bill to the lower house for amendment but it cannot veto legislation from the State Duma.

By-elections were to be held in March to fill eight vacancies due to a shortage of candidates in three regions — Chechnya, Tatarstan and Chelyabinsk — and the election of only one representative in the far north region of Yamalo-Nenets and in the Greater Moscow area.

Dudayev under pressure

Meanwhile, pressure on Chechnya's beleaguered President Dzhokhar Dudayev to resign intensified Monday as one of his main political opponents gave him just 11 days to relinquish power, the ITAR-TASS agency reported.

Yarag Mamodayev, former deputy prime minister of this tiny northern Caucasian republic, told the agency that Mr. Dudayev's rule "must be concluded by the end of the year."

"Opposition forces demand the departure of President Dudayev, whom they consider responsible for the plundering of Chechnya's riches," Mr. Mamodayev added.



A British U.N. soldier and an aid worker carry a wounded Bosnian Muslim from an ambulance to a helicopter at Metkovic, Croatia (AFP photo)

Serbian Socialists claim poll majority

BELGRADE (AFP) — President Slobodan Milosevic's Socialist Party will end up with an absolute majority in parliament following Sunday's general elections in Serbia, a party spokesman claimed Monday.

The former Communists were "sure" of obtaining at least 124 seats in the 250 seat parliament, and in any case would be the dominant party in the house, spokesman Ivica Dacic said.

The forecast was based on unofficial results after some 3.8 million votes had been counted, Mr. Dacic said. An estimated 70 per cent of the seven million electorate voted, according to the National Electoral Commission.

Opposition parties earlier had said the Socialists would — as pre-vote opinion polls suggested — again be forced to look for allies to form a ruling coalition.

The Socialists held 101 seats in the old parliament, but Mr. Dacic, quoting party returns, said this time they would win between 124 and 128.

First official results are not expected before Wednesday. But Mr. Dacic said his party had so far won 37.2 per cent of the votes counted, compared to 16.1 per cent for the Democratic Movement of four opposition groups (DEPOS), 13.1 per cent for the ultranationalist Serbian Radical Party, 11.3 per cent for the Democratic Party and around four per cent for the Democratic Party of Serbia.

Mr. Dacic also said the Socialists were well ahead in the Belgrade area, where the opposition is in control of local government.

Meanwhile, the deputy premier of Montenegro, Miroslav Ljesar, was assassinated in his office early Monday, the Interior Ministry announced in the capital Podgorica (formerly

Titograd). He was shot dead by Drago Krivokapic, the former manager of a transport firm in Danilovgrad, 20 kilometres away, which recently went into liquidation. The murderer turned his gun on himself immediately after shooting his victim.

The two men arrived together by car at the government headquarters in Podgorica and went into the minister's office. The motive for the murder was not immediately known, but investigators expected it to be connected with the Tara Company's liquidation.

Mr. Ljesar, 43, an economist, was the government's spokesman on economic affairs.

In Bosnia, a Belgian soldier escorting a supply convoy was killed by sniper fire, a U.N. spokesman said Monday, as heavy sniper fire provoked an official alert in Sarajevo after a day of shelling there.

Describing the capital as "unstable," United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) spokesman Major Desmond Van Biesebroek said armed exchanges continued Monday in central Sarajevo, a day after Bosnian Serb forces fired more than 140 shells there amid continuous sniper fire.

Sunday's exchanges, which were concentrated on the city centre and northern and western districts, left two people wounded, Maj. Van Biesebroek added.

Monday's sniper fire prompted city authorities to call a general alert, urging residents to restrict their movements.

The UNPROFOR spokesman said the situation also remained tense in Visoko, near where Belgian Sergeant Marc Oban, 31, was shot dead Sunday at the wheel of the lead vehicle in an UNPROFOR

convoy. Sgt. Oban, who was not driving an armoured vehicle, was hit by sniper fire in the shoulder and lungs after passing through a Bosnian army checkpoint at Buel, three kilometres from Visoko.

He died shortly afterwards in Kiseljak Hospital. Married with two children, he was the third Belgian soldier to be killed in former Yugoslavia.

The convoy was on its way from Zagreb to Kiseljak to resupply UNPROFOR headquarters there. Kiseljak is around 10 kilometres south of Visoko.

Meanwhile heavy fighting was also reported in Mostar, southern Bosnia, where Bosnian Croat forces fired more than 100 shells, and mainly Muslim Bosnian troops about 20, the UNPROFOR spokesman said.

Some 139 shells also fell in and around the northern town of Gradacac, the site of clashes between Serb and Bosnian government forces, Maj. Van Biesebroek said.

French Foreign Minister Richard Dugue said Monday France could withdraw its 6,000 U.N. troops from former Yugoslav territory "next spring" if there appears to be no chance for a peace settlement by then.

Mr. Dugue said the 12 members in the European Community could make a joint decision on such an "option."

"If the political process comes to fail, the new situation this creates will have to be taken into consideration," he said. "The 12 (member EC) would have to decide together on what should be done," he said, adding that "the possibility of a withdrawal is one of the options."

But for the moment, "no decision along these lines has been taken," Mr. Dugue said.

1st all-woman police station opens in Tokyo

TOKYO (R) — Japan's first neighbourhood police station manned only by women opened in Tokyo's Ritz Ginza district Monday, police said. The six policewomen on duty are all masters of judo, aikido or other martial arts. Like their male counterparts, they carry revolvers and all are certified as good shots. "We hope this new police box will improve the image of the Metropolitan Police Department," a spokesman said.

Americans believe in angels — poll

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Americans believe in angels, according to a poll published in the latest issue of Time magazine. According to the poll reported in the Dec. 27 cover story The New Age Of Angels, 69 per cent of Americans believe in the existence of angels, compared to only 25 per cent who do not. Americans on the other hand are more evenly divided when it comes to fallen angels, or devils: 49 per cent say they believe in them, while 45 per cent say they do not. Of those surveyed, 46 per cent believe they have their own personal guardian angel, while 21 per cent do not. The survey, which was conducted Dec. 2 among 500 adult Americans, has a margin of error of plus or minus 4.5 per cent.

Family abandons 5-year-old alleged killer

NEW DELHI (R) — A five-year-old Indian boy, accused of clubbing three children to death in eastern Bihar state, has been abandoned by his family, a newspaper said Saturday. The Delhi-based Pioneer said Harender Choudhary has been charged with the Dec. 6 murder of an eight-year-old girl, her 18-month-old sister and their six-year-old brother. It said Harender objected to the three children playing in front of his home and when they did not heed him, clubbed them with a bamboo stick. Children below six years cannot be prosecuted under Indian law. The Pioneer said Harender's father, fearing reprisals by the victims' family, has gone into hiding, abandoning his son on the dusty streets of his home village.

'Arrogant' German not so sure of himself

BONN (R) — Popular prejudices may portray Germans as arrogant, but they apparently think a lot less of themselves than their reputation abroad suggests. INFAS, a leading polling institute, was surprised to find that a full 78 per cent of Germans they polled said "no" to the question: "Would the world be a better place if everyone was like the Germans?" Only 21 per cent thought it would be. "Germans have a reputation for arrogant," said a spokesman for INFAS, which carried out the survey for the first time. "We decided we would check it out." INFAS was so intrigued by the results that the institute would pose the question regularly, he said. The spokesman traced much of the self-effacement to the concern that has spread across Germany as its economy stalled while unemployment and the costs of unification rose. Another question in the same survey mirrored this concern, showing that 73 per cent of those responding were worried by Germany's current state compared to 55 per cent only two years ago.

U.S. lottery jumps to \$90m

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — The jackpot in the multistate Powerball Lottery rolled over to an estimated \$90 million for Wednesday's drawing, the game's second-highest prize. No one had all six numbers in Saturday's drawing for \$67.5 million, but 25 players won the game's \$100,000 second prize by hitting the first five numbers. The game's highest prize was \$111 million, won by a Wisconsin teacher last summer. Charles Strutt, director of the multi-state Lottery Association, said it is hard to predict where the jackpot will go if nobody wins it Wednesday because people don't buy as many tickets in the holiday season. Players choose five different numbers from one to 45 plus a separate number, called the Powerball, from a separate field of 45 numbers. Each ticket costs \$1.

ANC, Afrikaners agree on polls, Volkstaat

JOHANNESBURG (R) — The African National Congress (ANC) and the white right-wing Afrikaner People's Front (APF) said Monday they had reached an agreement that could open the way for the APF to take part in South Africa's first all-race elections next April.

A statement issued on behalf of the two bodies said both supported a democratic non-racial South Africa and agreed on "the need to seek ways to address the desire of many Afrikaners for self-determination in a Volkstaat (Afrikaner People's State)."

"This could, subject to the fruition of this agreement into a detailed final accord, open the way for the Volkfront to participate in the interim structures and the election," a statement issued by intermediaries for the two sides said.

The statement was issued as the government, ANC and

leaders of the Freedom Alliance, an umbrella group of black and white conservatives, met in Cape Town in last ditch efforts to break a deadlock on a constitution for a post-apartheid South Africa.

The Freedom Alliance, which includes conservative Zulu chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi's Inkatha, has rejected the constitution and is boycotting a multi-party Transitional Executive Council set up to prepare for the first all-race election on April 27.

The APF, also a member of the alliance, includes the Conservative Party, the neo-Nazi Afrikaner Resistance Movement and other right-wing white groups.

A source close to the APF leadership said details needed to be worked out but the agreement "gives acceptance to a Volkstaat... it is a good agreement."

"The relationship between

the Volkstaat and the rest of the country still needs to be worked out, but we have an agreement in principle," the source told Reuters.

"The question of boundaries has still to be fully resolved but its solution is based on the premise that the Afrikaner must be in a majority," the source said.

He said the APF had agreed to ANC demands that every South African had the right to live in the homeland if they so desired.

"There will be no laws preventing blacks from living in a Volkstaat,"

ANC President Nelson Mandela said in an interview with Reuters Sunday the ANC had a duty to persuade the ultraright to join an overall settlement.

But he added: "What we are not going to allow, of course, are demands like an Afrikaner Volkstaat. There is no question of our ever conceding to that demand."

One of the intermediaries said ANC Deputy Secretary General Jacob Zuma and APF leader General Constand Viljoen would sign a memorandum of agreement at a news conference in Johannesburg Tuesday.

Meanwhile, 19 people, including two children, were killed early Monday when a minibus taxi and a truck collided near Laingsburg, about 350 kilometres north of Cape Town, police said.

Police spokesman Captain John Sterrenberg said five more people were injured in the accident which occurred in the early hours of Monday.

Rescue workers said the minibus was flattened by the lorry.

Emergency services were still on the scene Monday lunchtime trying to free the injured and dead from the wreckage.

Sterrenberg said the minibus was heavily overloaded, carrying 22 people in a vehicle designed for 15.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Baross named to succeed Antall

BUDAPEST (AFP) — Hungarian President Arpad Goencz designated Interior Minister Peter Baross Monday to become prime minister following the death from cancer on Dec. 12 of Jozsef Antall. Mr. Baross, 65, who has been acting premier since Mr. Antall's death, is vice president of Democratic Forum (MDF), the main party in the ruling centre-right coalition. His party chose him a week ago as its candidate for the post. He was to be formally appointed by parliament Tuesday. The parliament, where the MDF in alliance with the Christian Democratic People's Party and the independent Smallholders Party holds a small majority, was also to vote on the new premier's programme.

Blast damages gas pipeline to Armenia

MOSCOW (AP) — Georgian crews worked to repair the main pipeline that delivers gas to Armenia Monday, one day after an explosion damaged a 50-foot (15-metre) stretch, the Interfax News Agency reported. Police have been unable so far to determine whether the explosion was accidental or the result of sabotage, Interfax said. The explosion occurred Sunday night in Georgia's Marneulsky region, an area near the Armenian border and populated mostly by ethnic Azerbaijanis. Last winter, Armenia accused Azerbaijan of repeatedly attacking the pipeline to cut off heating fuel to Armenia. The two former Soviet republics have been at odds over the enclave of Nagorno Karabakh for more than five years.

Malval criticises Aristide

PORT-AU-PRINCE (R) — Acting Haitian Prime Minister Robert Malval has for the first time publicly lashed out against the Caribbean nation's exiled president, saying he was hurting his country by refusing to return for talks, the New York Times said Sunday. Mr. Malval was interviewed by the newspaper Saturday after returning home following unsuccessful efforts to organise a national conference in Haiti to break the political deadlock over returning Jean-Bertrand Aristide to power. The idea was rejected by Mr. Aristide, who said the security of his supporters could not be guaranteed inside the turbulent country. Secretary of State Warren Christopher Friday expressed support for Mr. Aristide following a Los Angeles Times report that Washington had abandoned efforts to restore him to power.

No plan for elections — Hosokawa aide

TOKYO (AFP) — Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Masayoshi Takemura said Monday that Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa had no plan to dissolve the lower house of parliament for general elections. "The government should not talk about dissolution, and I think the prime minister has no plan to dissolve it," the chief government spokesman said at a news conference. Mr. Takemura was referring to weekend comments by ruling and opposition party leaders that Mr. Hosokawa might dissolve the 511-member lower house in late January if he failed to win parliamentary approval for political reform bills. The bills are now before the upper house after being approved by the lower chamber.

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DONT MISS IT

Al Ahli look poised to win Jordan Basketball Championship

By Aileen Bannayan
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Eight matches remain before the country's top-two basketball teams, Al Ahli and Al Orthodoxy, clash for the 1993 title of the first division basketball championship.

Tuesday's matches will provide coaches of both teams with a good opportunity to put their players and strategies through a final test as they face the third and fourth teams of the competition.

Former champions Al Orthodoxy, who won the title throughout the eighties before losing it in 1990 and 1992 to Al Ahli, will face fourth-placed Al Ahli in the first round final, had defeated Al Ahli 90-71 in their first round match, while Al Ahli had scored a big 128-66 win over Al Jazireh.

In this week's other matches newcomers Al Wifaq and Al Ashrafiah who have already

been relegated will take on Al Watani and Al Hussein who are both fighting for fifth place.

During the first round, Al Watani had defeated Al Wifaq 81-54 while Al Hussein had overcome Al Ashrafiah 86-51.

Results of matches in the past week came as no surprise to anyone.

Al Ahli continued their unbeaten streak with a 94-53 (52-21) win over Al Jazireh, while Al Orthodoxy scored a crushing 90-32 (45-11) win over Al Watani.

In another match, Al Jazireh managed a 67-58 win over Al Hussein.

Al Hussein, now in sixth place after a first round 80-78 loss to Al Watani in double overtime, led 8-2 before Al Jazireh caught up at 12-12 and ended the first half 36-24.

Meanwhile Al Wifaq, who have so far failed to score a win, lost 52-45 to Al Ashrafiah in the final minute of the match.

Al Wifaq players, apparently determined to score a face-saving win, led 32-20 at half-time. They continued to lead 44-39 before Al Ashrafiah caught up, took the lead and converted the match to their advantage by scoring to win by free throws.

STANDINGS

Team	P	W	L	SF	SA	Pts
Al Ahli	12	12	-	1219	554	24
Al Orthodoxy	11	10	1	1058	665	21
Al Jazireh	12	9	3	961	806	21
Al Watani	12	6	6	941	807	18
Hussein	12	5	7	770	947	17
Ashrafiah	12	3	9	845	954	15
Wifaq	12	2	10	575	1113	14
Wifaq	11	-	11	449	974	11

* Al Orthodoxy and Al Wifaq have a postponed match.

Slovenian upstages local hero Tomba

MADONNA DI CAMPILIO, Italy (R) — Jure Kosir of Slovenia upstaged local hero Alberto Tomba to win an Alpine skiing World Cup slalom Monday, giving his country its first cup win since independence from Yugoslavia in 1991.

The 21-year-old Kosir produced two excellent runs in foggy conditions on the Canale Miramonti piste to clock a combined time of one minute 34.69 seconds, edging out Tomba by nine hundredths of a second.

"I skied a very cool race. I knew that it would be a good time when I crossed the line," said Kosir, whose previous best result was second place in a slalom in Lech, Austria ear-

lier this year.

"I can't imagine a sweeter win than to beat Tomba because Alberto is simply the best in slalom," he added.

The triple Olympic champion Tomba, second in a giant slalom in Alta Badia on his 27th birthday Sunday, accepted defeat with a smile as thousands of Italian fans cheered his performance.

His 80 point haul should lift him ahead of Norwegian Kjetil Andre Aamodt at the top of the overall World Cup standings once the provisional slalom results are confirmed.

Norwegian Finn-Christian Jagge, reigning Olympic slalom champion, took third place in 1:34.93.

Tomba, skiing in the bold, buccaneering style which has become his trademark, made a costly mistake on the lower part of the course — just as he had done Sunday.

The Italian rocked back on his skis and looked set to lose his balance completely before a superb recovery limited the damage.

"I didn't ski to the best of my best ability, but this second place is good enough," Tomba commented after missing out on his third straight slalom win.

Tomba is the sport's ultimate showman, but Kosir is also something of a character having recorded a rap record with his colleagues from the Slovenian team. The accompanying video was broadcast by Italian television before the run.

Slovenian athletes had enjoyed success in World Cup competition while competing under the Yugoslav flag, Bojan Krizaj winning this race in 1984.

The third place for Jagge was a welcome return to form after a disappointing 1992/93 season. Madonna is a happy venue for him since he recorded his only World Cup win here in 1991.

Aamodt placed 10th, one position behind fellow all-rounder Guenther Mader of Austria.

Tomba now tops the overall World Cup standings on 454 points, just seven ahead of Aamodt (447) with Mader third (423).

Brazil, Italy given tough World Cup draw

LAS VEGAS (Agencies) — Three-time champions Italy and Brazil were handed the World Cup venues they pitched for, but the opponents they feared at Sunday's draw for the 1994 tournament at the Las Vegas Convention Centre.

Italy were given the prestigious Giants Stadium in New Jersey, in the hot-bed of America's Italian community, for two of their three first-round matches. And if they can overcome some tough opponents they could play all their games up to the final, except one, at the same venue.

But they paid for their good fortune in America's gambling capital by drawing Ireland, Norway and Mexico as Group E opponents.

Italy were stretched to their limits in achieving a 1-0 victory over Ireland in the quarterfinals of the 1990 World Cup on home territory in Rome, and Norway, one of the surprise success stories of European qualifying this time, have proved their undoing in the past.

Italian officials had picked Norway as one team would rather avoid after the Scandinavians cost them a place in the 1992 European Championship finals when they beat them in Oslo and drew in Genoa.

Mexico showed they could be a force next year after an admirable debut in this year's Copa America South American championship.

Italian coach Arrigo Sacchi said his side and Brazil had the hardest group.

"It will not be easy for us, we have three formidable opponents. But if we want to win the World Cup we have to play well," he said.

Brazil's fate looked even worse with coach Carlos Alberto Parreira's personal nightmare of drawing three strong teams coming true in the form of Russia, Cameroon and 1992 European Championship semifinalists Sweden.

He had wanted to avoid the powerful Africans Cameroon — quarterfinalists in 1990 — and feared drawing one of the two strong Scandinavian teams from the outsiders' pool.

Before Sunday's draw, Parreira had described the line-up his side ended up with as "a group of death."

His saving grace was that Brazil will play two of their three first-round games in San Francisco's cooler climate, something they had asked FIFA to arrange to make their passage towards the final less arduous.

They had wanted to avoid at all costs Orlando where they feared the debilitating humidity and heat could hamper their chances of winning the World Cup. The finalists will play seven matches in four weeks.

In a break with tradition, FIFA matched up the venue cities with the groups after they had been drawn in an attempt to place teams in communities where they will have big support.

Brazil's third first-round game is in the Pontiac Silverdome near Detroit — where World Cup matches will be played indoors for the first time.

Parreira said after the draw that Group B was so strong and finely balanced any of the four teams could win it, and any four could finish last.

Holders Germany and 1990 losing finalists Argentina, the other two favourites, found themselves in much weaker groups which should assure them of a good second-round tie, against one of the third-placed teams from another group.

Germany kick off the 1994 World Cup on June 17 in Chicago against South Americans Bolivia, appearing in their first finals since 1950.

They also play Spain and weak Asian qualifiers South Korea.

Argentina meet Greece in their opening game in Boston,

and also meet Bulgaria and Nigeria, probably their hardest opponents.

If results go according to form, Italy and Germany are heading for a quarterfinal showdown, with Argentina probably their semifinal opponents. And with Colombia looking to have a good first-round draw against the United States, Switzerland and Romania, they could be on course for a semifinal against Brazil or possibly the Netherlands.

The United States face a tough task to reach the second round.

But coaches and players have predicted that next year's World Cup finals — the 15th — could be a lot more open than for some time, particularly after FIFA, the games' governing body, changed the rules to award three points instead of two for a win in the first-round league stages.

Reaction to this week's decision, done in a bid to encourage teams to play more attacking soccer and penalise those that play for draws, has been widely praised.

German coach Berti Vogts said: "It could be positive as you can still get three points with one win in your last match and that would probably be enough to get through to the second round."

Alketas Panagoulis, who took Greece to their first World Cup finals, said: "I think it's a step forward after Italia 90 with all those 0-0 boring games."

"You are obliged to make some effort in attacking play because the two-point gap between a win and a draw forces teams to go forward."

Nigeria's Dutch-born technical adviser Clemens Westerhof added: "I like it because it will encourage more attacking football."

Gordon Baoks, England goalkeeper who they won the 1966 World Cup, said: "It's an excellent idea because we won't see teams sitting back to

defend, unless they have very good forwards."

"There will be no point playing for a draw and we will therefore see more goals scored."

Banks also predicted some surprises, particularly from the African teams.

"I think there will be some shocks from the Africans. I think they are good enough to take points off the top seeded teams, which will make it a more open World Cup."

Pele left out

The United States officially began their hosting of the 1994 World Cup Sunday in typical Hollywood style with a classic display of show business hype.

The only problem was the sport's biggest star was nowhere near the lights on centre stage.

Pele, the most famous soccer player and the game's biggest ambassador, was left out of Sunday's draw because of a row between himself and Brazilian soccer chief Ricardo Teixeira, the son-in-law of FIFA boss Joao Havelange.

The show went on without Pele. But without the most recognised soccer face in the world under the lights, it was like a Hollywood gathering without a few words from Bob Hope or Elizabeth Taylor.

"Joao decided for me, do not be in the draw," Pele said. "I feel the same. I will continue to work."

Havelange, 77, has been criticised for allowing his problems with Pele to invade the draw. But Pele, considered the greatest player ever and now an ambassador for the sport, said he did not encourage such criticism.

"I want everyone to know I have nothing against Joao Havelange or FIFA," said Pele, who left the hall with 25 minutes remaining in the ceremony. "He's my idol since 1958. He encouraged me, sent a lot of messages to me. That is

what I want everyone to understand."

"I don't think this is a FIFA issue. I think this is a personal message from Havelange. This doesn't change anything, this is a personal thing. I was invited and dis-invited."

"I did the draw in New York to select teams (for the qualifying tournament... in 1991). My life doesn't change if I pick the ball or not. But the Brazil Federation we will change."

Alan Rothenberg, president of the U.S. soccer federation and chairman of the World Cup USA 1994, unsuccessfully tried to change Havelange's mind.

"I was very disappointed," Rothenberg said, adding he had no authority over the draw ceremony and worked only at FIFA's direction.

Pele has accused the confederation of Brazilian football (CBF) of corruption. Teixeira, the head of the confederation, has sued Pele for defamation.

Pele charged that a television group with which he is affiliated outbid a rival by \$1 million for rights to local Brazilian games, but was not awarded the contract because, Pele claimed, his group failed to pay a bribe to Teixeira.

"The point people should know he is his son-in-law... the problem is with the Brazilian Confederation, his son-in-law, with his secretary, when we had business this summer in Brazil, were opposed to me, because I don't accept corruption," Pele said.

"I do not accuse any person. We have a big problem in Brazil with soccer. In Rio, they are trying to do a separate league because they are not happy with the administration."

"What I want to make clear is my problem is with the CBF, because I do not accept what they do with my company."

Several FIFA officials, including General Secretary Joseph Blatter, tried to convince Havelange to back off and allow Pele to participate.

Wachter threatened by fellow Austrians

FLACHAU, Austria (R) — Anita Wachter, women's Alpine skiing World Cup holder, must watch out for her Austrian teammates as she seeks to consolidate her overall lead in this season's title chase in a super-giant slalom Tuesday.

Wachter, fourth in a combination in St. Anton at the weekend and victor in two giant slalom this season, won a World Cup super-G in Las Lenas, Argentina, in 1989 and has finished second five times in her career.

But fellow Austrians Ulrike Maier and Renate Goetschl should give her a run for her money, while experienced French racer Carole Merle will be eager to produce a decent

performance after an indifferent start to this Olympic season.

Maier, twice super-G world champion and winner of two races in the discipline last season, has won one giant slalom and finished third behind Wachter in another.

Competition in the first super-G of the season should be further enlivened by the presence of 18-year-old Goetschl who caused a shock at the weekend by winning the St. Anton combination and taking second place in her first World Cup downhill.

Merle, who has won 11 super-Gs in her career, finished third in the opening giant slalom in Soelden in October but has not made the podium since.

Witt stronger than ever, aims for Olympics

HERNE, Germany (R) — Katarina Witt, in a great comeback to competitive figure skating this weekend, cleared the first hurdle on the hard road to the 1994 Winter Olympics.

At 28 twice as old as some of her contenders, the glamorous queen of figure skating finished second at the German Championships Saturday to qualify for January's European Championships.

The result boosted the double Olympic champion's ambition of becoming one of only two German skaters eligible for the Olympics in Lillehammer, Norway, a month later.

"It was an exceptional feeling to stand there on the podium again after nearly six years," Witt told reporters.

She said it was a personal victory for her to be able to

return to a sport that has developed rapidly since she turned professional after winning gold at the 1988 Calgary games.

"I wanted to show that if you have a dream, go out and try to fulfill it no matter what people say," said Witt, who proved doubters wrong by emerging stronger and more agile than ever.

Witt soared across the ice with four triple sashow and toe-loop jumps, including two flawless combinations, in the decisive free programme.

"She excelled herself tonight," said Jutta Mueller, Witt's old trainer who helped her win two Olympic, four world, six European and eight East German titles in the 1980s.

Witt has used a new rule allowing paid skaters to be

reinstated as amateurs. But the demands in competition are much higher than in professional ice shows.

Since announcing her comeback in January, Witt has gained two kilos in sheer muscle from workouts and improved what was always a relative weakness of hers, the triple jumps.

"Her jump has become enormously explosive," said Karin Knoll, a sports scientist at the Leipzig Institute for Applied Training Science.

"To some extent she is even better today than she was in the old days," said Knoll, whose institute closely monitored Witt in East Germany. "She has performed a great feat."

Knoll said Today's young figure skaters had better technique and more power than

when Witt was at her 1980s peak.

Witt fell in the toe-loop combination during her dress rehearsal of the free programme in Frankfurt two weeks ago, but kept her nerves under control at the championship.

"I knew she had the jumps when she needed them," said Elfried Beyer, a judge. "I don't know where she gets this strength from but she has got it."

Manfred Hoenele, an East German expert who followed Witt's earlier career, said her main asset, the artistic pre-

sentation, had only improved with the years.

"She is older and more a woman," he said. "The crowd gets goose bumps from seeing her."

Witt did her free skating to the anti-war song Where Have All The Flowers Gone? a tribute to war-torn Sarajevo where she won her first gold medal at the 1984 Winter Olympics.

Wearing a red, knee-length dress, she was awarded three scores of 5.9 out of the maximum 6.0 for presentation by the nine judges.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF
AND TAMARA HIRSCH
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LOOK FOR THE SILVER LINING

Both vulnerable. North deals.

NORTH
♠ A K 10
♥ A 8 6
♦ Q 8 2
♣ 6 5

WEST EAST
♠ 7 2 3 2 ♠ Q 8 4
♥ J 10 3 ♥ 7 6 4
♦ J 10 3 ♦ 7 6 5 4
♣ Q 8 4 ♣ K 7 3 2

SOUTH
♠ J 9 6 5 3
♥ K Q 7
♦ A 8
♣ A J 10

The bidding:
North East South West
1♣ Pass 1♠ Pass
2♠ Pass 4NT Pass
5♣ Pass 6♠ Pass

Opening lead: Four of ♠
Just because you spot two lines that can be combined to land the contract doesn't mean you have given it your best shot. Dig around to see whether you can't do even better.

The bidding is typical of the hurry-burly of rubber bridge. The final contract, however, was sound enough. Only the club opening lead made life difficult.

Since the defenders had set up a trick on the go, declarer needed to take care of the club loser before losing any other trick. The obvious play was to rely on the trump finesse, but declarer wanted better than a 50 percent shot for the slam.

The line South adopted was an slight extra chance. The ace and king of trumps were cashed in the hope that the queen would drop. When that yielded nothing, declarer cashed the ace and king of diamonds and the king and queen of hearts, then led a heart to the ace. Had both defenders followed, declarer would have been able to discard one club on the queen of diamonds and the other on the 13th heart as a defender ruffed. Unfortunately, East ruffed the third heart and returned a club — down one.

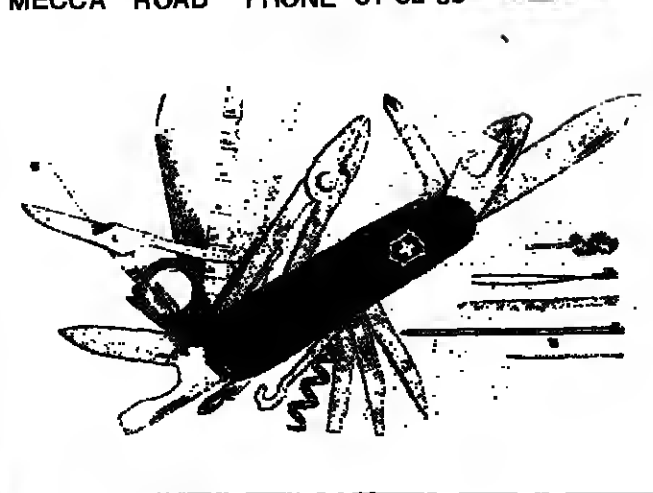
There was an additional chance — to find either defender with specifically J 10 x of diamonds. Declarer should cash only one high trump before playing off the ace and king of diamonds. Now declarer returns to dummy with the other high trump and cashes the queen of diamonds for a club discard and, since the jack and ten have dropped, the remaining club goes on the nine of diamonds.

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	PHILADELPHIA	CONCORD	PLAZA	Nabil Al Mashini Theatre	AHLAN THEATRE			
	STONE COLD Starring: Brian Bosworth Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	CONCORD "1" Beauty and the Beast Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30 CONCORD "2" Dancing Heavenly Bodies Shows: 3:15, 6, 8:15, 10:15 Hi America Play Show: N/A	Ahmad Zaki and Mahmoud Hamideh in AL BASHA (ARABIC) Shows: 12:30, 3:15, 5:00, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	previews a play entitled: Al ilm Nuron A popular political comedy Actors: Abeer Issa, Deoud Jatajel, Hassan Al Shaar, Fuad Shomail In addition to other comedians Every night at 8:15 Tickets are sold all day	The political comedy WELCOME ARAB SUMMIT Daily 8:30 p.m. The theatre closes Saturday and Sunday English synopsis available The Theatre will be closed from 25/12/93 till Monday 3/1/1994			

NEWS IN BRIEF

Libya denies kidnapping dissident

SHARJAH (AFP) — Libya has denied kidnapping a prominent dissident from Cairo, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) newspaper Al Khaleej reported Monday. "Libya has no interest at all in abducting Mansour Kikhia, who at (the age of) 70 does not pose any threat to the regime," Ibrahim Beshari, Libya's representative to the Cairo-based Arab League, told the daily. Mr. Kikhia, 63, disappeared on Dec. 11 after leaving his hotel in the Egyptian capital where he was taking part in an Arab human rights congress. He lives in Paris.

Rasmussen offers Danish help for peace

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen pledged Danish help to ensure peace in the Middle East when he met his Israeli counterpart Yitzhak Rabin here on Monday. "We will do what we can to assist you in the work for peace," Mr. Rasmussen said, paying tribute to Mr. Rabin's "courage" in signing the Sept. 13 autonomy deal. "A ray of hope has lit the sky in this region so full of history, so full of suffering and so full of talent," he added.

Vatican confirms accord with Israel

VATICAN CITY (AFP) — The Vatican confirmed on Monday that an agreement to normalise diplomatic relations with Israel was to be signed on Dec. 30 in occupied Jerusalem. The development was announced by Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres last week and confirmed here by Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro who said the signing marked the conclusion of "a first stage of work" by a joint commission set up in July 1992.

Yemen, Saudi Arabia postpone talks

RIYADH (AFP) — Saudi Arabia and Yemen have postponed negotiations on their border dispute until mid-January at Yemen's request, the official Saudi Press Agency reported Monday. Yemen asked for the delay because its delegation leader Jaafar Saleh, had health problems, a Yemeni diplomat in Riyadh said. The negotiations were to have opened Monday in Sanaa. The talks on border provinces opened more than a year ago, but so far without progress.

Cyprus satisfied with British response

NICOSIA (AP) — Strained ties between Cyprus and Britain appeared on the mend Monday as officials expressed satisfaction with a message from British Prime Minister John Major. Government spokesman Yanakis Cassoulides said a letter from Mr. Major to President Glafos Clerides "satisfied the Cyprus government on quite a number of points." Cyprus lodged a succession of formal diplomatic protests to London in the last two months complaining of perceived pro-Turkish and anti-Greek Cypriot British government actions and statements.

Comoro islands election resumed

MORONI (AFP) — The second round of legislative elections on the Comoro Islands, abruptly called off Sunday without official explanation, resumed Monday except in two constituencies here in the capital. The elections, which should originally have been held 40 days after President Said Mohammed Djohar dissolved the federal assembly on June 13, had been postponed four times. The first round finally went ahead the Sunday before last.

Manila opens peace talks with rebels

PATIKUL, Philippines (AFP) — The Philippine government and Muslim guerrillas opened peace talks in this southern town amid heavy security Monday in a fresh bid to forge a political settlement after four centuries of strife. Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) leader Nur Misuari, returning from exile, faced a former enemy, retired armed forces chief Manuel Yan, at the negotiating table as the talks opened under the auspices of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC). As the talks opened, President Fidel Ramos told a news conference in Manila he was confident of "very positive results" from the meeting, which followed exploratory talks in Jakarta last month.

Palestinian group warns pilgrims

BEIRUT (AFP) — Palestinian group warned Monday that pilgrims may not be safe travelling to the Holy Land over the Christmas season. "The Palestinian people cannot guarantee the safety of pilgrims during the holiday season, especially in Jerusalem, at a time when they are waging a legitimate war of self-defence against the Israeli occupying forces," said the Fatah-Intifada led by Palestinian dissident Abu Musa. "We ask all those planning to travel to the Holy Land to take into consideration their safety," the Damascus-based group added in a statement published here.

Coup trial opens in Khartoum

KHARTOUM (AFP) — Twelve people appeared in court here Monday charged with plotting to overthrow Sudan's military regime led by Lieutenant-General Omar Hassan Al-Bashir and with selling state secrets to a foreign country. Shortly after opening the trial, in which 17 other defendants are also being tried in their absence, the presiding judge adjourned the hearing until Thursday for procedural reasons. Defence lawyers, who outnumbered the accused in the open court, said there were no grounds for the hearing since Gen. Bashir has repeatedly declared a general amnesty for those accused of carrying arms against the state. The prosecution, however, said the accused did not fall into the amnesty category since they were caught red-handed, did not voluntarily lay down their arms and also faced the espionage charges.

EC agrees mandate for Israel accord

BRUSSELS (R) — European Community (EC) foreign ministers on Monday formally agreed mandates for the European Commission to negotiate new trade agreements with Israel and Tunisia. Commission officials said the EC executive hoped to start negotiations in both cases early in the new year with the intention of completing them during 1994, if possible by mid-year.

Muslim girl expelled in veil rumpus

GRENOBLE, France (AFP) — A Muslim teenager was expelled Monday from a school in Grenoble, eastern France, for refusing to remove her veil during gym class, school authorities said. Named only as Sherazade, the girl was banned from the Lycee Mounier after obtaining permission from her head teacher to cover her face during all lessons barring gym, for which she was instructed to remove the veil on safety grounds, the school said. A final-year pupil of North African origin, she had agreed to the compromise until she returned from summer vacation, when she changed her mind.

Gunmen fire on car of Arafat loyalist

TYRE, Lebanon (AFP) — Gunmen in South Lebanon opened fire on the car of a Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) military official loyal to Yasser Arafat, but he was not inside and his wife and children escaped unhurt, the official said Monday. Sultan Abdul Nayn, a member of Mr. Arafat's Fatah faction, blamed Sunday's attack on Fatah members opposed to the Israel-PLO autonomy accord. It was the third attack on an Arafat supporter since the deal was signed in September. Mr. Abdul Nayn told AFP his wife and two of their children were in the car when it was intercepted by armed men near the village of Shabnha, north of the Palestinian refugee camp of Rashidiyeh in South Lebanon. The gunmen pumped five bullets into the car but no one was hit.

Hariri defends policies; no pullout from peace talks

BEIRUT (Agencies) — Billionaire Prime Minister Rafik Al Hariri on Monday struck back at allegations he is abusing his office to increase his wealth and trying to muzzle the free media, one of his most vocal critics. "There's no intention to censor the press or strangle freedoms. This is unthinkable in Lebanon," the tycoon-turned-politician told his first news conference since taking office 14 months ago. A rags-to-riches tycoon who is one of the world's wealthiest men, Mr. Hariri, 50, was hailed as Lebanon's savior when he assumed the premiership. He vowed to use his wealth, estimated at \$3 billion, to help rebuild Lebanon. But criticism has mounted among Lebanon's four million people because of the pace of reconstruction, an awesome task by any standards. Lebanon's economy was shattered by the war and rebuilding will cost an estimated \$25 billion.

Mr. Hariri's aggressive business style and his tight control of the decision-making process has also drawn fire. And he has been particularly stung by increasingly virulent allegations by politicians, legislators and the media that he is buying up real estate in Beirut's war-ravaged downtown sector, where he plans to launch an ambitious rebuilding programme early next year. Mr. Hariri, a Sunni Muslim, has faced constant sniping and rising speculation that his troubled half-Muslim, half-Christian government is heading for collapse. "Let no-one dream that ... they can topple the government," he declared sternly. He ridiculed opposition accusations that he has set up 60 real estate firms to borrow from the state-run housing bank to finance middle and low-income housing projects. "That's nonsense. I've many more than 60 firms, real estate and otherwise, and all are healthy. None needs to borrow from anyone, thank God," Mr. Hariri said. The allegations that he is seeking to restrict the media, arguably the freest in the Arab World, swelled last week when the government banned privately owned television stations from transmitting by satellite to Arab countries without authorization. Fifth private stations emerged without state licenses during the 1975-90 civil war, when government authority barely existed. Mr. Hariri denied their claim that the ban is aimed at giving exclusive satellite transmission rights to Mr. Hariri's own Future Television station. "This is a malicious campaign motivated by political opposition to drive a wedge between the president and government," Mr. Hariri said. The TV stations have urged President Elias Hrawi not to sign the bill into law.

Rift over policies threatens Brotherhood

By Jamal Halaby
The Associated Press

AMMAN — Serious political and organisational differences are threatening to split the Brotherhood as an entity to please the government. In a recent letter released to the media, Mr. Abu Ghanimeh accused the moderates of seeking to "splinter Brotherhood ranks and weaken its organisational and political actions and abandoning the Muslims' main cause, Palestine" — a reference to the group's opposition to the peace process, which has been confined to words. Hameez Mansour, a lawmaker from the Brotherhood's moderate camp, sought to play down the rift and asserted that it would not lead to a formal split. "I would not say that it is a battle," Mr. Mansour told the AP. "Differences in our group are an internal matter and they will be resolved through dialogue and consultations."

It could also lead to a serious confrontation with the government, which has been counting on moderation in the movement to avert threats to security in this predominantly Muslim country. Muslim fundamentalists, led by the mainstream Brotherhood, generally oppose the largely secular, pro-Western policies of the regime and are vehement opponents of the 25-month-old, U.S.-backed Arab-Israeli peace negotiations. They advocate the elimination of Israel and the establishment of an Islamic state in all of the pre-1948 Palestine where Israel was created. They also want to introduce strict Islamic law in Jordan and elsewhere in the Arab World.

But the Jordanian hardliners have kept their criticism to speeches in Parliament and, unlike their counterparts in Algeria and Egypt, have avoided violence as a means to register their opposition to government policies. Ziad Abu Ghanimeh, a leading Brotherhood member who leads the hawks, said Monday he had resigned from the movement in protest against "the leadership's violations of the Brotherhood's charter under the excuse of openness."

But, in an obvious bid to keep chances open for mending fences, Mr. Abu Ghanimeh said he remained a member of the Islamic Action Front, the political arm of the Brotherhood. "There are serious differences," he told the Associated Press. "The so-called moderates, who are unfortunately leading the movement, are trying to obliterate the Brotherhood as an entity to please the government."

In the elections to the 80-seat Chamber of Deputies pro-establishment politicians emerged as the dominant force by capturing more than 50 seats. The moderates in the Brotherhood are staunch royalists. Many have a record of siding with the King in his fight against communists and leftists in the 50s and 60s. The King rewarded them by offering them senior government jobs as well as seating them in the all-appointed Senate.

The hawks, most of them young and poor, were always held in check by the moderate leadership of the Brotherhood, which was established in Jordan in 1946. 10 years after Hassan Al Banna founded the mother movement in Egypt.

White House spokeswoman Dee Dee Myers said Monday that Mr. Clinton was "concerned about inaccurate stories about his personal life" and wanted to "check on the status" of the rumours.

Bruce Lindsey, a senior White House official and close friend of the president, said earlier "the allegations are ridiculous." Asked if Mr. Clinton denied having state police involved in facilitating sexual encounters, Mr. Lindsey said, "Yes, he has."

"Similar allegations were made, investigated and refuted during the (presidential) campaign," he said. The American Spectator

article's author, David Brock, reported that four troopers made the charges. Two remained anonymous, while officers Roger Perry and Larry Patterson openly made the accusations. "At Booker elementary school, I saw the governor engaged in a sexual act with a female," Mr. Patterson told CNN. In the article, Mr. Patterson said the act occurred in a car as he stood nearby. Mr. Clinton's daughter, Chelsea, attended the school. Mr. Perry told CNN that a treacherous woman was slipped into the governor's mansion after Mr. Clinton became president-elect.

The American Spectator quoted Mr. Perry as saying another trooper was offered a federal job in return for his help in thwarting publication of any stories. Mr. Lindsey said in a White House statement released last Sunday that "any suggestion that the president offered anyone a job in return for silence is a lie." The Patterson and Perry interviews were the first public allegations of marital infidelity by members of then-Governor Clinton's security force. Mr. Jackson said he agreed to have his clients interviewed on CNN because he "felt we needed the national TV ham-

Iraq wants normalised relations with Iran

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraq said Monday it wanted to normalise relations with Iran but added that the neighbour with which it fought a bitter eight-year war had to meet certain conditions first.

Iraq has "a sincere desire, stemming from principled considerations to normalise relations with Iran," the ruling Baath party newspaper Al Thawra said in an official commentary, but it added: "Iranian practices and standards contribute in one way or another to the placing of hindrances in the way of normalising relations between the two countries."

Iran and Iraq, regional rivals, particularly since the 1979 Islamic revolution in Tehran, were at war from 1980-1988. Al Thawra said its commentary was in response to what it described as recent Iranian newspaper articles urging better ties with Baghdad.

"This is something that can be achieved if Iran reciprocated the same sincere desire," it added. But it said there could be no progress until Iran halted cross-border incursions and sent some tens of thousands of Iraqi prisoners still held in Iranian camps five years after a U.N.-brokered ceasefire halted fighting in the war.

Al Thawra accused Iran of "actions of infiltration and sabotage" and of sending "groups of criminals across the border to undertake acts of terror and hooliganism" particularly in the southern parts of Iraq.

Iran is home to Iraq's exiled Shiite opposition movement, the Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) whose guerrillas attack targets in southern Iraq. Iraq is host to the Iranian opposition Mujahideen-e-Khalq, which has heavy armour and military camps near Iran's border.

Top-level talks between the two countries in Baghdad in October failed to solve the prisoner issue.

U.N. commanders fear that without the logistics, armour and equipment provided by the United States and other Western Nations, the 29-nation U.N. alliance would collapse and the broken country would plunge back to civil war.

Peace talks earlier this month failed to reconcile Somalia's rival warlords whose civil war led to famine and the deaths of 300,000 people before the U.N. intervened. French, Belgian and Swedish contingents also began leaving the volatile country last week.

Former colonial power Italy said on Sunday it would withdraw its 2,400 troops by the end of March. U.N. commanders said it was a major setback for the U.N. alliance.

The United Nations and the United States had been trying to persuade Italy to stay and help keep the alliance together. But officials said Italian Defence Minister Fabio Fabri, who met Gen. Shalikashvili in Mogadishu on Sunday, turned down the request. Germany will withdraw its troops from Somalia by March 31 alongside the American pullout, a government official said in Rome.

The withdrawal plan had been approved in principle by the United Nations, he said. Defence Minister Volker Ruehe earlier made it clear that for logistic reasons the Germans had to coordinate their pullout with the withdrawal by the Americans.

Meanwhile, James Dobbins, President Clinton's special envoy on Somalia, arrived in Pakistan Monday for talks with senior military officials on Pakistan's role in the U.N. peace operation in Somalia, officials said.

During his two-day stay, Mr. Dobbins will discuss "the entire operation in Somalia," a Foreign Office spokesman here said.

6 executed in Egypt; 14 killed in violence

CAIRO (Agencies) — Six convicted militants were executed Monday, including a Palestinian whose family in Illinois enlisted the help of a U.S. senator to plead with President Hosni Mubarak to spare him. Meanwhile, fresh violence broke out in southern Egypt with militants killing three plainclothes policemen in two separate attacks near the town of Assiut.

The deaths brought to 14 the number of people killed in less than 25 hours, nine of them policemen.

The six men hanged Monday were convicted by a military court of belonging to an outlawed organisation the government says is a revival of the Jihad group, which assassinated Egyptian President Anwar Sadat in 1981.

The defendants also were convicted of killing a driver and his assistant to steal their vehicle and of possessing weapons and explosives. Among them was Mohammad Hosam Al-Sbari, 25, whose family in Highland, Illinois, maintains he has a history of psychiatric problems that should have been considered in his case. Al-Sbari is of Palestinian origin but holds an Egyptian passport.

Sen. Paul Simon, an Illinois Democrat, wrote to Mr. Mubarak on Dec. 7, saying the family believes Sharif was wrongly convicted and that his schizophrenia may have affected the outcome of his trial. Rola Al-Sbari, Mohammad's sister, telephoned to the Associated Press in Cairo a certificate from a Kuwaiti hospital saying her brother was treated for 33 days in 1988 for schizophrenia.

The others executed Monday were identified as Abdul Hamid Mohammad Haballah, Fathi Imam Abdul Meguid, Khawalid Mohammad Barakat, Mohammad Abdullah Mohammad and Rafat Mahmoud Mohammad. A security source said the six men were hanged one after the other in a Cairo prison in a process that took several hours.

The hangings brought the number of militants executed this year to 29, by far the highest number of people put to death for political crimes in Egypt in any year this century. But the executions, after swift trials in military courts condemned by human rights groups, have not stopped a two-year-old campaign of violence by militant groups.

On Sunday, Gamaa gunmen killed a police brigadier, his driver and a bodyguard in the southern university town of Assiut, 325 kilometres south of Cairo. Police returning from a raid on a mosque in a nearby town took on the attackers, killing all three but losing two officers dead. A militant died in the mosque raid and a taxi driver was killed in crossfire, bringing the death toll from the day's bloodshed to 10.

Then on Monday morning, as the hangings began in Cairo, suspected Gamaa gunmen shot dead a policeman walking to work in the town of Manfalut near Assiut.

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Burglar nets nil at Hong Kong Billionaire's home

HONG KONG (R) — A burglar armed with a gun and knife spent three hours apparently prowling around inside Hong Kong billionaire Li Ka-Shing's home in the early hours of Monday morning but failed to find anything to steal. The man broke into Li's luxury villa about 3 a.m. and threatened three household servants with his weapons, police said. Government radio said he tied them up but the police spokesman said he was not sure about this. Nor did the police say what the intruder did for the three hours until one of the servants tackled him and raised the alarm. "He was inside until 6 a.m. when he was subdued by a Filipino male servant after a scuffle," the police spokesman said. Police said the burglar, an illegal immigrant from China, did not steal anything. Li, considered one of Hong Kong's richest businessmen, was at home at the time of the break-in but did not know anything about it until the police were called.

Wellington (R) — A New Zealand church minister said Monday people were morally justified in stealing if they were unable to survive by other means. The Reverend Brian Turner, a Wellington mission superintendent, compared modern New Zealand with feudal England, where the poor were forced to steal to survive. "I take the view that if people's natural birthright for good housing, health and adequate food, if the process of a society robs people of that and they've tried every other means to meet these needs and they're then left with stealing, then there is some moral justification for stealing," Rev. Turner said. He told reporters people using foodbanks set up to provide food to the needy had provided they would steal as a last resort. Requests for help from foodbanks have rocketed since sweeping cuts to welfare payments were made in 1991. Chris Wood, coordinator of the Lower Hutt Foodbank near Wellington, said she had been aware of people stealing food for some time. "We have clients who have found themselves in desperate straits. The food aid agencies have been closed and they have hungry children. I can understand it completely," she added.

Washington murder rate tops 1992's

WASHINGTON (AP) — The murder rate in the U.S. capital, swept past the 1992 mark as four people were killed during the weekend, police said. Last year's murder rate of 451 was surpassed Friday when three people died in two separate shootings. Then, early Sunday, a man in his mid-40s was found dead of multiple gunshot wounds, police said. That brought the total number of homicides of 455 this year, according to police. "I'm not saying all is lost," police chief Fred Thomas said Saturday. "I am still encouraged (that) we will not surpass our deadliest year or second-deadliest year." The District of Columbia's murder rate hit an all-time high of 490 in 1991. In 1990, 493 people were murdered. In October, Mayor Sharon Pratt Kelly requested permission to call in the National Guard to assist local police, but President Bill Clinton refused. In the nearby suburbs, the homicide rate is climbing also. A triple-murder Saturday at a party in Rockville, Md., about 10 miles (16 kilometres) outside Washington, sent that country's homicide rate to 29 for the year. The previous record of 28 murders had been set in Montgomery County in 1991.

3 car thefts in 4 years from one man

MANAMA (R) — Thieves have stolen the car of one long-suffering Indian in Bahrain three times in the last four years, the Gulf Daily News reported Monday. The newspaper said K. Sriram, assistant manager for a shipping firm, found his 1983 Toyota missing on Friday morning. Four years ago his 1980 Toyota was stolen but recovered after four days with some parts missing. A year later it was stolen again and found damaged 15 days later.

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